15

健速
Takehaya

最下層の俺が!

INVADERS of the ROKUJYOMA !?

六畳間の侵略者!? 15

『青騎士』っ、
旗を掲げよ！
出撃、サトミ騎士団!!
敵は地底人の急進派！
キリハの笑顔を守り抜け――

そしてキリハは気付く。
孝太郎は今、キリハの弱さを受けいれてくれているのだと。
「……ありがとう、孝太郎……」

Kiriha's Now

Part 1

Friday, July 2

The girl known as Kurano Kiriha has a domestic and tolerant atmosphere to her. However, that's not all there is to her. She had another side to her, namely, the commander of the underground people's invasion force.

That said, Kiriha and the others' invasion of the surface was a peaceful one. Apart from their registrations being fake, almost all of their invasion is done through legal means. They also take part in the local community, actively communicating with the locals. In other words, Kiriha and the others' invasion is intended to cause as few problems as possible for the locals.

The biggest reason as to why they chose to go with such a roundabout way to invade is because they don't like being forceful. They had been unjustly chased away from their homes in the past, but they had no intentions of doing the same to the people of the present. That's because of their pride and stubbornness. The tribe that Kiriha and the others are a part of, the People of the Earth, is a very prideful tribe.

There was also one more reason as to why they were avoiding an invasion through force. The underground people's population was in decline, and there wouldn't be enough time to redo their invasion. That's why they had to pull it off the first time without fail. And as a result, Kiriha's peaceful invasion was necessary.

If they invaded through force, they would probably be able to secure some territory. They had enough power for that at least.

However, territorial conflicts between the different people would occur, labelling Kiriha and the others as terrorists and forcing them into a long-term battle. If that happened, without any base on the surface, they would gradually lose power and population. Defending their pride would only lead to ruin.

However, the People of the Earth were not united, and apart from the conservative faction that Kiriha and the others belonged to, there was also a radical faction that sought to invade the surface through force.

Why did they have to bow down to the people that had chased them away from their own homes? Especially since they were far more advanced. Retaking their homes through military force was only just and being ruled by the superior People of the Earth would be what's best for the surface dwellers. Or so the radical faction sees it. The radical faction consisted of dangerous people who had gathered because of their grudge from the past, befit of the evil persona one might attach to invaders from underground.

Fortunately, the conservative faction had far more numbers than the radical faction, leaving them in the majority. As a result, the radical faction could never get the initiative in the politics. But if the radical faction was to perform a large scale military action on the surface, the people on the surface would counterattack, unable to distinguish between the conservative and radical factions. If that happened, everything would go the way the radical faction wanted. That's why Kiriha and the others always kept an eye on any movement from the radicals.

Kiriha was currently in her own room underneath room 106, facing her computer. On the screen was her father, Kurano Daiha. She was in the middle of talking with him and exchanging information.

"... that's the report I've received. Kiriha, it seems like what you've said before is becoming a reality, and there's not much time. We might have been too slow to notice."

"Who could have suspected that magicians like from out of a fairy tale exist and that they're working with the radical faction?"

The information Daiha had all supported what Kiriha had suspected.

The radical faction had been operating under the surface for a while now. They began to rapidly gather talent and capital, causing the conservative faction to suspect that they were up to something. But they couldn't tell what it was that they were planning. Every time they tried investigating, the information disappeared somewhere along the way for some reason. As the tribe chief, Daiha had quite the capability to gather information, yet not even he could find the truth behind this. As a result, while it was obvious that the radicals were up to something, the conservatives couldn't find any leads.

"And based on the fact that Chief has failed to collect any information, it is very plausible that a magician is intervening."

"Hmm... there is certainly enough circumstantial evidence... and it would also mean that top-secret information is being shared with the magicians. I find it hard to believe that information is the only thing they'd share."

The fact that they couldn't find any leads despite something big going on was circumstantial proof in itself. Even the best of information networks wouldn't be able to intercept a magician's means of transmitting information. The fact that important information was being entrusted to magicians showed how strong their cooperation was. The underground radical faction and the

magicians were working together to do battle against their own enemies. That was no longer something that could be doubted.

“It is believed that top level spiritual technology has been leaked to the magicians.”

“I don't want to believe it but... it seems like a product model of that test model that you brought with you is being mass-produced.”

There was also one more hint to be found. It was the artificial arm that had been left behind during their last battle with Maya. The arm was brought back underground and left to scientists from the conservative faction for analysis. From there, they analyzed the capabilities of the test model and got an estimate on the specs of a potential product model. They estimated the amount that could be produced through funding from an unknown party and the strength of a military force equipped with it. The very imagination of it seemed like a nightmare.

“On top of that, it can be expected that the product model is being shared with the magicians, and in return they gain magic weapons on the same level. That would be fatal for us as we have no protection against magic.”

“So robotic soldiers powered by spiritual energy would attack us using magical weapons, huh...”

“The conservative faction is attempting to contact magicians as well, but there's no time. We should assume that we will have to deal with this alone.”

“We noticed it too late... it can't be helped. Kiriha, it seems like the People of the Earth may be forced to consider a large-scale battle, no, a war, with one another.”

Daiha seemed mortified.

Daiha and the others of the conservative faction would prepare for battle. That was a major logical contradiction. In one way, it was the same as admitting defeat.

“Chief, can't war be avoided?”

Kiriha had reached the same conclusion as Daiha had, but even then she wanted to avoid having her people harm each other.

“We will attempt to avoid battle, but considering the situation, war can't be disregarded. Just preparing for battle might be enough to start it.”

“I understand what you are saying, but the chance for communication must never be closed.”

Kiriha understood the meaning behind Daiha preparing for war, and that it was necessary. But she wanted to reach a conclusion through conversation. She wanted to leave the possibility to end this peacefully open. That was Kiriha's painful wish, something she had wished for ever since she strived for the surface.

“You're right. I will try to keep it that way.”

Hearing Kiriha's powerful words and her expression, Daiha could feel his daughter had grown.

All of a sudden, the Kii that used to only cry... is just like her mother...

That was both reassuring and lonely. Any father wanted for their daughter to always remain as such. But Daiha also wanted to sit

down with just the two of them so they could talk about how Kiriha had gotten so strong, once everything had become peaceful.

“Kiriha, I will send more personnel to you as well. You will need to strengthen your own defenses.”

“That won't be necessary, we have enough here. Please use all of them at your end. In order to avert war, you would surely need as many people as possible.”

“I'm not sending them because I'm your father. They're needed for you to avoid war as well. I can't afford to lose you.”

“Then instead of personnel, please send over the heavy combat module that were being developed for Karama and Korama.”

“If it works as designed, then it would indeed be more than enough for you to protect yourself... but it's incomplete, the spiritual energy necessary to move it is unrealistic. Even if I send it over, you won't be able to make use of it.”

“I have an idea for the spiritual energy required on my end. I should be able to get it activated.”

“I understand. We won't be able to finish it in time anyways, so I will send it over to you.”

“Thank you very much, Chief.”

There, their discussion stopped, the information exchange was over. Daiha's expression loosened up and returned to that of a father's as he smiled at Kiriha.

“Finally... Kiriha.”

“Yes.”

“... Do not under any circumstances die.”

Even now as Daiha remembered his wife's funeral, he felt a pain in his chest. He didn't want to feel the same way for his daughter. If possible, he wanted her by his side, but he didn't have a commander more capable than her, leaving him with a feeling of impatience.

“I am not alone anymore. That's why, I'll be fine, father...”

Kiriha understood how Daiha felt, she was an intelligent girl capable of that. That's why she smiled one last time as his daughter.

Part 2

Normally after returning to room 106, Kiriha's confident smile would remain unchanged, but today her smile was stiff. She couldn't remain cheerful after hearing that the radical faction was on the verge of exploding. She couldn't help but imagine the worst, which showed on her face. While she was a good girl, she was still a girl in her teens.

“... What are you doing, Satomi Koutarou?”

Koutarou was playing with Kiriha's cheeks.

“Nothing in particular... I just wanted to see your weird face.”

He would pull on them or push them together, creating one weird face after another.

“Yeah, the more beautiful the face the funnier it looks doing this.”

“Koutarou...”

“... Kiriha-san, you can do everything on your own, but don't try to carry all of the burden yourself. If you need to, you can rely on us. Your beautiful face is going to waste.”

Koutarou was playing around with Kiriha's face because he was worried for her, as she was always one to smile, keeping her feelings bottled up. If she was showing a serious expression, it must mean that there was a serious problem, which of course Koutarou wasn't happy to hear. He wanted her to smile all the time. He didn't care if it was a teasing smile or a pure and earnest one. Because he knew that it was something both he and the girls needed.

“... If you're going to be so kind, I might just break down and cry right here and now.”

Koutarou's feelings were conveyed to Kiriha and her expression eased up a little. She was happy that there was someone that understood her. Even more so since it was the person she loved.

“That's fine. As long as the normal you return afterwards.”

“Those are big words, Koutarou.”

Kiriha's smiled turned into a teasing smile. She looked like she might actually start crying depending on Koutarou's words.

“How do I put this... I can't calm down if you and the others aren't... you know... yourselves.”

Koutarou honestly spoke about how he felt, though he was embarrassed knowing that this wasn't something he would normally say.

Ever since he had talked to Mackenzie, the presence of the girls of room 106 had become much clearer. The girls being happy was an absolute minimum requirement in order for Koutarou to be happy. He was embarrassed, but he could clearly understand that now.

“I love you, Kiriha!”

That was when Sanae abruptly hugged Kiriha. She hugged her from behind with her arms around her neck like she normally did with Koutarou. She of course also had the same happy smile she does with Koutarou.

“What now, all of a sudden, Sanae?”

Since Sanae was behind her, instead of looking at Sanae, Kiriha gently stroked Sanae's arms as she asked her question.

“Nothing, I just wanted to properly let you know.”

That alone was enough for Sanae to understand. Kiriha's warmth and presence gently wrapped around Sanae, and in return she hugged Kiriha even harder.

“Thank you, Sanae. I love you too.”

“Ehehehe. Love is all.”

“That's true, you're right.”

“If you're ever in trouble you can rely on this angel of love, Sanae-chan!”

“Fufu, I'll do just that.”

Sanae's simple and straightforward feelings were easily conveyed to Kiriha. Thanks to that, she seemed to return to her usual self.

There’s no longer any need for me to step up to the plate...

Koutarou flashed a small smile and decided to leave the rest to Sanae. Koutarou was troubled if Kiriha wasn't herself, but the same was true for the other girls too. That's why there was no need for Koutarou to cheer up Kiriha all alone. He could rely on the other girls as well.

“Here you go, Satomi-kun.”

“Thank you very much, Sakuraba-senpai.”

A cup of tea was put down in front of Koutarou, on the table. Looking at Koutarou and the others go back and forth, Harumi figured that the tea would be needed soon.

“Still, I'm impressed you noticed that Kiriha-san was feeling down.”

Harumi sipped on her own tea as she smiled at Koutarou, feeling admiration for him. He had been far quicker to notice how Harumi was feeling than she was.

“Kiriha-san is normally so calm, so seeing her show a different expression shows just how down she was feeling.”

“I see... that might be another side to it.”

Harumi nodded satisfied and her smile grew brighter. Harumi loved people who could be kind to anyone, so this was something she greatly respected.

“You're wrong, Sakuraba-senpai.”

However, Yurika who was sitting next to Koutarou objected. She pouted and stared at Koutarou with grudge in her eyes.

“Satomi-san just favors Kiriha-san.”

“That's not my intention.”

“You're lying. Because you never show me any consideration.”

“That's not true.”

Hearing Yurika's protest, Koutarou sprung into action right away.

“Fugyu.”

Koutarou forcibly pulled Yurika to him, and began playing with her cheeks like he had with Kiriha. As a result, the puffed-up cheeks withered in his hands.

“I'll do it to you too. There, take that.”

“S-See, you're just playing with me! Do it when I'm feeling down please!”

“Even if you say that, you only feel down about trivial stuff. Like forgetting to buy a manga or breaking a plate. I can't comfort you every time.”

“They're important problems to me!”

“I don't care.”

Yurika showed her dissatisfaction, but Koutarou continued playing with her cheeks.

The truth is, this is your fault too, Yurika. You always try to solve your real problems yourself...

In contrast to his words, Koutarou treasured Yurika. He was only playing around with her cheeks as a sign of that.

“Geez! Satomi-san is always bullying me! You only do the painful stuff to me!”

Yurika continued to frown with dissatisfaction.

Can’t you be a little kinder, geez!

The truth is that Yurika knew that Koutarou was treasuring her as well. But her outlook on men and women was a bit old-fashioned so she had complaints about how she was being treasured.

“Oh, are you sure you should get so aggressive, Yurika?”

“You're not going to fool me anymore!”

“I see. What a shame~... I even got you new cup noodles~”

“Cup noodles?!”

However, her anger didn't last for long.

“I-I won't be fooled by a single cup.”

That said, she at least tried to resist. But the way she would sneak glances at Koutarou let him know that she had already been moved.

“It's not just one. Since you've been working so hard on your studies lately, I bought all three new flavors.”

“... Satomi-san you bully... Why didn't you just say so from the start... geez!!”

Yurika pouted once more.

As a reward for her efforts, Koutarou had bought three flavors of her favorite food. Though the question whether cup noodles was a fitting present or not remained, if he had just said that from the start then everything would have played out the way Yurika imagined it. Yet he had been very vague about it on purpose and teased her.

Why doesn’t Satomi-san act more like a lover... eh, a l-lover?!

“Hau?! Auaah~!!”

Yurika was at a loss for words when she realized what she wanted of Koutarou.

“Hm? What's wrong?”

Yurika turned red and started to violently struggle.

T-This is a k-ki... aaahhh!!

An unimaginable thought popped into her head and she became desperate to escape.

Part 3

Yurika didn't calm down until a while after she had gotten the bag with cup noodles in it from Koutarou. She was now facing a wall, closely hugging the bag of cup noodles and mumbling about something.

“What's up with her...?”

“Just leave her be for a while, Satomi-kun.”

Koutarou was perplexed by Yurika's actions while Shizuka cheerfully watched the two.

Shizuka knew of Yurika's feelings and wanted to continue listening to their carefree and warm conversation. But at the same time, she would feel bad if she let Yurika get cornered any further, so she decided to stop Koutarou.

“You should study up on a woman's emotions some more.”

“I am aware of that.”

Koutarou obediently returned to the tea table. He had heard what Shizuka said from his best friend, Kenji, several times in the past, so he was able to accept that he had made some kind of mistake.

“Hm?”

Having returned to the table, Koutarou picked up his cup to sip on some tea, but it was empty. So Koutarou called out to Ruth so he could get seconds.

“Ruth-san, can I have some more tea?”

Since Ruth was getting more tea for Theia, he figured he could have her get some for him as well.

"..."

However, Ruth didn't respond. The room was small and she was right in front of him, so she should have heard him, yet she remained silent. She silently continued to pour tea without turning to look at Koutarou. She was quite clearly ignoring him. Shizuka, who had noticed the same thing, snickered and poked Koutarou with her elbow.

"Satomi-kun, isn't it that thing again?"

"Haa... again?"

Once Shizuka pointed that out, Koutarou understood and reluctantly called out to Ruth again.

"... Lord Ruthkania Nye Pardomshiha, vice captain of the Satomi band of knights, pour me another cup of tea."

"Yes, as you wish, Master! I will prepare it right away!"

As he did, Ruth who had been ignoring him just a moment ago cheerfully complied with his request. Her eyes were sparkling as she joyfully prepared more tea. She even brought snacks despite not having been told to do so.

"Things sure have gotten confusing..."

Koutarou felt a headache coming on and held his head.

Ever since the band of knights had been formed, Ruth would want Koutarou to call her by her official position from time to time. She also tried to get him to give her orders. In other words, she was happy that she had been made the vice captain of the band of knights.

“Oh, you came back at a good time, Koutarou.”

That was when Theia approached Koutarou. After sitting down next to him, she presented him with a small paper bag.

“Here, it's today's salary. You may gratefully receive it.”

Inside the bag was money, and a pretty sum at that. This act of Theia's was equally as headache inducing as Ruth's behavior.

“Theia, I don't need a salary.”

Just like Ruth wanted a clear order from Koutarou, Theia wanted to pay Koutarou as his princess. But Koutarou would be on Theia's side even if there was no money involved. In fact, he didn't want money to get in the way of their relationship. That's why he was reluctant to accept the bag filled with his salary.

“I won't take orders from you! When I pay you your salary, I am very princess-like! Let me act like a princess every once in awhile!”

Theia normally built a relationship with Koutarou as a normal girl. But from time to time, she wanted to feel like a princess and pay Koutarou his salary. The act of paying his salary was more important to her than the money itself.

“Hey now...”

“Besides, there is no inconvenience if you hold onto my money.”

Theia thought of herself, Koutarou, and Ruth as one in mind and flesh. So she didn't find it inconvenient if money moved between them. She simply enjoyed the act of paying a salary.

“Ah, then that aside... why not do it at the end of each month instead? It must be a pain doing this daily for you too.”

Theia wanted to play 'knight and princess'. Once that was made clear to Koutarou, he gave up on objecting. It was the truth that they were in a master and servant relationship after all. The only remaining problem was the pain of receiving his salary every day.

“No! I don't want to!”

However, Theia adamantly rejected this. Her beautiful golden hair was disheveled as she shook her head.

“I want to pay you every day! I want to feel like a princess every day!”

She was like a child pleading for a toy.

Seeing that, Koutarou lost all motivation.

“... You're an idiot aren't you?”

“That's 'Are you an idiot, my beloved princess Theiamillis?'”

“So you're admitting to being an idiot.”

“Yes. This is my hobby.”

"... Okay, okay, you really are a pain... I will gratefully accept, princess."

"Ohohoho, very good, my knight!"

Koutarou gave up and took the paper bag. As he did, Theia covered her mouth and laughed elegantly.

"Well, it's not like I don't understand how you feel..."

Koutarou smiled wryly as Theia was in a great mood. He had a hobby that dumbfounded others as well, namely beetle hunting, so he couldn't blame her too much. He also believed that Theia had one more goal in mind.

"So."

Koutarou looked over the lovely, small, paper bag in his hand.

"Here, Aika-san, I'm counting on you."

He then handed it over to Maki.

Since the band of knights was formed, Maki had been in charge of finances. That's why handling the salary received from Theia was Maki's job. Koutarou believed that Theia giving him salary was also partially so that she could give Maki something to do.

"..."

However, Maki wasn't accepting the bag for some reason. She was holding an accounting book and was quietly watching Koutarou. Her eyes were filled with expectation as if she was appealing to him.

“Phew...”

Koutarou could tell what she wanted right away, and he reluctantly lived up to her expectations.

“...Lord Aika Maki, Indigo Knight of Satomi's band of knights, do the accounting on today's salary.”

“Understood, Master~♪”

Maki seemed quite content as she showed a bright smile, accepted the bag from Koutarou and opened her accounting book. Seeing Maki like that made Koutarou happy too, but he felt a complex emotion as well.

“That looks like a lot of work, Satomi-kun.”

“... I don't understand women's emotions.”

Like that, Koutarou's shoulders slumped as he answered Shizuka.

Beetles and Sun Rangers

Part 1

Saturday, July 3

When Koutarou had invited Yurika to join them for some beetle hunting, she immediately declined. She didn't like exercising and she hated exhausting herself. Yet on the day they left, Yurika was in the group for some reason. With her lack of stamina, she was already out of breath shortly after they started climbing up the mountain path, and she was muttering complaints as she lazily walked in the back of the line.

“W-Why do, I have to, go as well?”

“You're already severely lacking in training, and ever since you started studying you rarely go outside. If you don't move your body every now and then you'll lose your mind, you know.”

“I'd rather, finish reading, my manga, than train.”

“Quit complaining and follow me.”

“O-Okay!”

Yurika had been unable to hide her dissatisfaction, but the words Koutarou had nonchalantly spoken erased it completely.

Shut up and follow me.... I will follow you, Satomi-san... forever... ehehehehe♪

Those words weren't meant in the way Yurika imagined, but they were words she wanted to hear so she completely cheered up.

“Oh Satomi-san, despite what you say, you can't bear being without me, geez♪”

Yurika put her hands on her cheek and began fidgeting. However, Koutarou left her behind as he continued walking. Yurika wasn't the only one he was worried about.

“You too, Clan. You're about as untrained as Yurika and you keep locking yourself up in your laboratory. You're not allowed to fly today.”

Koutarou was equally worried about Clan's health as he was for Yurika's.

Like Yurika, Clan tended to only do what she wanted. While she had been showing consideration towards others as of late, she was lacking in consideration for herself. That's why Koutarou felt that it was his job to pay attention to her.

“I-I know.”

Like Yurika, Clan was also out of breath. The clothes that were easy to move in and the insect catching net she was carrying looked quite nice on her. But even then she was still a sheltered princess; she was out of stamina before they even reached their intended destination.

“In return, once you can't walk anymore, I'll carry you like before. Go ahead and use up your stamina.”

“Once again you tease like that!”

Hearing Koutarou's words, Clan felt like she was being made fun of. However, Koutarou was serious.

“I'm not teasing you. I was the one who invited you, I'll take responsibility.”

“... Y-You better mean it...”

Clan imagined herself being carried like in the past and blushed. But because she was exhausted and out of breath, Koutarou didn't notice.

“When you put it like that, I feel a little sorry.”

That was when Harumi who was walking in front of Koutarou and the other two slowed down and walked next to them, joining their conversation.

“It's okay for you, Sakuraba-senpai.”

“But I'm the only one who has it so easy... I feel sorry.”

Harumi had an apologetic look on her face. She was actually wearing a special device and was using its power to climb the mountain. It's effects were amazing, as she effortlessly climbed up the mountain without using any stamina. That's why she felt bad for Clan despite she herself having it so easy.

“Being born with a weak constitution is different from being untrained. Using a device to make life easier doesn't count.”

“H-He's right... you should conserve your strength, and only use your own power when doing something you really want to do.”

But Koutarou and Clan thought that was for the best. If it wasn't for that device, Harumi wouldn't be able to join today's beetle hunting.

“Thank you very much. Then I'll do just that.”

Moved by their words, tears formed in Harumi's eyes as she bowed deeply. That was when Clan who still wasn't used to being thanked opened her mouth in order to hide her embarrassment.

“S-So how does the PAF feel?!”

PAF, or Power Assist Field, was the name of the device Harumi was using. This device was a new invention Clan had created for Harumi.

The PAF was based on the personal barriers that Clan and Theia used for self-defense. More specifically, it covered Harumi's body with a weaker barrier, and as she moved, it altered its shape in real time to assist with her movement. As a result, Harumi was several times stronger than normal and was able to move so lightly, it was as if she had sprouted wings. Thanks to the barrier's support, she barely used any stamina.

To put it simply, it was like a recreation of the power assist in Koutarou's armor, only it made use of a barrier instead. Of course, since it was replicated using a barrier, its capabilities were far inferior to Koutarou's armor. The output was weaker and the real time transformation of the barrier was slow because of the complicated program it required. However, the PAF had a feature that clearly distinguished it from Koutarou's armor.

The main body of the PAF, the modified barrier generation device, was so small it could be attached to Harumi's belt. Because of that, it could always be used, unlike Koutarou's armor. It could also be easily operated through an on and off switch. On top of that, with its weak output, it could be used for an entire day without any fear of running out of energy. Its most outstanding feature was that

regardless of whether the PAF was being used or not, there was no change in Harumi's appearance. In order for the barrier not to stand out, it had been altered to be made transparent. Thanks to that, it could be used in everyday life.

The PAF had been created using ordinary technology, but its use was anything but ordinary. The technology blended in perfectly with everyday life.

“It's wonderful. My body is light, and I don't feel tired at all. Even my strength, look!”

“Woah?!”

Harumi casually hugged Koutarou and easily lifted his body up.

“I can barely feel Satomi-kun's weight. It's amazing.”

“... I'm embarrassed.”

“Eh?”

Harumi had been acting innocently, but Koutarou's words were enough to cause her eyes to shoot wide open.

“Uhm... this is...”

It was now that Harumi realized that she was hugging Koutarou, and her face gradually turned red.

“I-I-I'm sorry! I was so happy it just kind of happened!”

“No... I don't really mind...”

Harumi hurriedly let go of Koutarou and looked down on the ground with embarrassment. Harumi's feelings towards Koutarou had taken form, but she was still not good with direct expressions of her emotions.

“I'm glad there, aren't any problems. If there's something bothering you, let me know, right away. There's always, room for improvement.”

Clan showed a slight smile as she gave Harumi a helping hand. Clan had already regained enough calm to do so, but she was still out of breath as always.

“Okay, thank you very much.”

Harumi regained her smile. Seeing that, Koutarou felt relieved. He felt like he was bullying Harumi when she had been acting so bashful. That's why to leave Harumi be for a moment, he turned to look at Clan again.

“What was the device that Sakuraba-senpai is using called again?”

“PAF.”

“I see, about that PAF. You should put some proper research into it and sell it in Forthorthe.”

“Sell it?”

Clan opened her eyes wide. She had never had the idea of selling one of her inventions before. She would research what she wanted and use it as she pleased, she would also beat others to the punch. That was how Clan used to operate. That's why she was puzzled by Koutarou's words.

“Yeah, that way you can help not only people with weak bodies like Sakuraba-senpai, but the elderly and handicapped as well.”

“I can, help others...”

Since Clan had always been alone, she couldn't properly imagine helping many others. This was another way in which she was sheltered.

“That's right. You'd greatly contribute to society. Just like your grandmother did.”

“Bertorion...”

But by the time Koutarou mentioned her grandmother, Clan had made up her mind.

A decade or so ago when Clan's grandmother had died, she had arranged it so that her entire inheritance was given to charities. Feeling like she could do something similar, Clan of course started wanting to put more research into PAF.

“That's a wonderful idea! I will help as a test subject, Clan-san!”

As Clan made up her mind, Harumi, who had recovered from her embarrassment, offered her assistance. Having had a weak constitution since she was a child, Harumi could imagine just how many people would be helped if PAF could be put to practical use. She also believed that it would be even better if many people worked together, rather than relying on Clan alone.

“Harumi... thank you. I'll be counting on you...”

With Harumi offering her help, Clan was greatly moved. As a supporter, Harumi didn't have that much influence. Based on Clan's status, Harumi's assistance might be miniscule, but even then, that was enough for Clan. She felt reassured just knowing that Harumi would help.

“However, you don't have much common sense when it comes to money, so don't sell it at too high a price.”

“I already know that!”

“As long as you don't, you're sure to get a ton of support. You'd be one step closer to empress.”

“Eh...?”

Clan's eyes opened wide. She couldn't believe what Koutarou had just said. That's why she asked him in a fluster.

“Bertorion, you don't mind if I become empress instead of Theiamillis-san?!”

Koutarou was Theia's vassal. That's why he should be wishing for Theia to become empress.

Yet, he didn't sound like he did, which Clan couldn't believe.

“The life of the people should be given priority right? That's why the most suitable person should become empress. Compared to that, it doesn't matter who I serve.”

That was only natural to Koutarou. While it was true that he had become Theia's vassal, he had no intention of confusing that with Theia's quality as an empress. If Theia became the empress, yet she

lacked the necessary qualities, the people would be unhappy. What was important was the people's happiness, not who was empress.

“The future will decide if you or Theia is the most suited to be empress.”

“... As expected of the Blue Knight, you're strict.”

Clan sighed and smiled wryly.

Koutarou would correct mistakes and show the right way, even if it was his lord that erred; that was his loyalty. Not accepting mistakes and always showing the righteous path. The embodiment of Alaia's ideals. He was a vassal far tougher than your average enemy.

“The Blue Knight's got nothing to do with it.”

“I wonder how many knights there are in this age that could declare that...”

Clan was amazed by Koutarou's unhesitant knightly behavior, but she was secretly very pleased.

Bertorion wishes for me to be a worthy princess...

The most worthy one between Theia and Clan should become empress. But looking at it from a different perspective, it meant that Koutarou wanted Clan to become a worthy princess fit to become empress.

Part 2

Many people were positive towards Harumi using PAF, but there was one who showed a discouraged expression.

“... Unfair, Harumi always gets the fun stuff. Hey, hey, glasses make me something like that too!”

That person was Sanae. She didn't have any complaints about Harumi using the PAF, but it looked fun and she wanted to try too. So with her eyes sparkling she sidled up to Clan.

“S-Sanae, you don't need it.”

While Clan was being pressured by Sanae, she managed to shake her head.

“What does it matter? Don't be so stingy and make one for me too.”

“But you can do it yourself right?”

“Eh? What do you mean?”

“You could just do the same with your spiritual powers. You cover your body with spiritual energy and use your powers to move it.”

“Ah, I see! Glasses, you're smart! I'll give it a try!”

After being taught how the PAF worked, Sanae smiled and held her hands together.

“Transformation!! Kabutonga!!”

Sanae struck a heroic transformation pose. To her, the PAF was just a tool to transform into a hero.

“Amazing, Sanae-chan is glowing!”

“This is the power of a maiden!”

Sanae proudly puffed up her chest. A faint glow, similar to a firefly was emitting from her body. It was the gathered spiritual energy.

“Sanae, hold back your powers a little more so you don't glow. You're standing out like a sore thumb.”

“Ah, right. Like this?”

“Yes, that looks good.”

As Sanae restricted her spiritual energy, the glow faded away. However, the spiritual energy was still enveloping her body.

“Ei!”

“Kyaa Kyaa Kyaa?!”

Sanae hugged the nearby Yurika and lifted her up. While she was a girl and light, she was still weighing close to 50 kilos when adding in her clothes and accessories. Yet Sanae easily lifted Yurika up, something unthinkable considering Sanae's physique.

“Satomi-kun, did you, see that?”

“Y-Yeah... Sanae, you...”

Seeing Sanae like that, Shizuka and Koutarou were at a loss for words. They hadn't been surprised about Sanae being able to lift Yurika, but rather by the spiritual energy she had emitted just before.

Normally, people couldn't see spiritual energy. Just like you can't see ghosts, only those with talent like Koutarou or Shizuka could see it. So if normal people like Yurika and Clan could see it, it meant that so much spiritual energy had gathered that part of it had been converted into light. In other words, the spiritual energy that Sanae had focused in that moment bent the very laws of physics.

Since Koutarou and Shizuka could see spiritual energy, they could see Sanae control it with their very eyes. That was what had surprised them.

“Ow?!”

“Ah, sorry, Yurika. I didn't think there would be branches above.”

“Please look before you lift me up!!”

“Does it hurt?”

“It hurts!!”

Sanae had accomplished something astounding, yet she was completely unaware of the fact and casually chatted away with Yurika.

“So this is what it means to misuse your power...”

“That's not what it means!”

“Kabutonga Sanae's sudden betrayal.”

“You were just being careless!!”

Looking at Sanae and Yurika partially in surprise, partially in amazement, Koutarou caught a glimpse of something flash in the corner of his eye.

“That's...”

As he turned to look that way, he saw Kiriha standing there. She was staring at a card in her hand. It was the card that had flashed.

Part 3

Noticing that Kiriha was looking at her card, Koutarou approached her.

“You're still carrying that thing around?”

“This is my— ,no, this is Kii's treasure after all.”

A lot of people were focused on Sanae and Yurika. Nobody was looking at Koutarou and Kiriha. That's why Kiriha responded with her personality from ten years ago, though more accurately it was now eleven years ago.

“Then keep it tucked away somewhere safe.”

“Are you embarrassed?”

“... Yeah.”

With a slight blush, Koutarou nodded. In response, Kiriha cheerfully smiled.

“Because when I'm looking at this card, it's like I'm saying I'm in love with Onii-chan after all.”

Koutarou felt precisely the way Kiriha had said.

He had been told that the silvery card was one of Kiriha's precious mementos from long ago, he had even heard the detailed circumstances around it. But it wasn't until this year that he learned that it was actually he himself who had given that card to Kiriha during his travels to the past.

As a result, he was well aware what kind of emotions Kiriha was feeling as she stared at the card. That's why the pubescent boy part of Koutarou couldn't help but feel embarrassed.

“If you get it then put it away.”

“Okay. I'm a good woman, so I won't do anything that would trouble Onii-chan.”

While Kiriha happily looked at the troubled Koutarou's expression, she pushed the card in her hand back into her pocket. She then turned the gaze she had when staring at the card to Koutarou.

“H-Hey...”

“Fufufu...”

Kiriha no longer needed to pour her emotions into that card since the person they were directed towards was right in front of her. Kiriha didn't hesitate to redirect those feelings right at him. That gaze full of love and trust troubled Koutarou even more than before.

What should I do with her... well, I guess I should call the end results good...

Koutarou had brought Kiriha with him on this beetle hunt because she hadn't been able to get any rest lately as problems in the underground was taking all of her time. He wanted her to forget about all those problems for today and just take it easy.

“By the way, we walked in the forest just the two of us ten years ago as well.”

“That's true. But we're looking for beetles today, not stars.”

“I'm sure we'll find lots of them. We found the star too after all.”

“I hope so...”

Kiriha smiled like she did ten years ago, and held hands with Koutarou like she had back then. Koutarou was embarrassed by that, but when he thought of it as a compensation for her smile, he quietly held her hand back.

Part 4

From his experience as a kid, Koutarou knew where lots of beetles could be found. It was a secret place that the local children had inherited from the older children. It seemed like they were working hard at breeding this year as well, and within just a few minutes of arriving they had already caught their first beetle.

“Looks like they really are around here.”

Koutarou was holding the newly caught beetle and happily looked around the area. The forest was lit up by the bright summer sun and gave off a very green impression. The wind passed by the trees, rustling their branches, giving off the distinct smell of a forest. The

forest that Koutarou had grown so accustomed to during his youth welcomed him in this year as well.

“Alright, now to the next one.”

Koutarou sprang into action looking for his next catch. But after taking two, three steps he realized he should probably put away the beetle he just captured.

“Here, Satomi-kun.”

As if waiting for this moment to come, the insect cage that Koutarou called Henrietta appeared before him.

“Oh?”

“You need this right?”

Maki was the one who had presented the cage to Koutarou. She had opened the cage and was waiting for Koutarou to put the beetle inside.

“Thank you, Aika-san.”

“You're welcome.”

After Koutarou put the beetle inside, Maki swiftly closed the lid, and after hanging the cage off her shoulders, she reached into her pocket.

“Aika-san, the insect—”

“Here.”

As Koutarou was about to enter the thick of the forest, he wanted the insect repellent. However, before he could finish what he was saying, Maki had already pulled the spray bottle out of her pocket. It was as if she knew what he was going to ask for from the very beginning.

"... Aika-san, you get what I want to do, don't you."

Koutarou felt admiration for Maki as he accepted the spray from her. In the past, Maki had anticipated what Koutarou would do and stayed a step ahead of him. But now, the contract between them had been annulled, and there was no longer a mental connection created by magic between them. Normally, things wouldn't develop like they did before.

"I've started to know again recently. I wonder why?"

Maki didn't have a clear understanding of the reason, she simply knew what Koutarou was going to do. It was as if the contract had been recreated.

But I'm kind of happy about this...

There were two reasons as to why Maki had been able to anticipate Koutarou's actions again.

The first was because they were very compatible with one another to begin with. Maki was capable of loving Koutarou even without the contract. That was just how compatible they were.

What had thrown that compatibility out of whack was the unease that Maki had. Who was she, and was she really allowed to be here? Questions like that blinded Maki and made her unable to anticipate

Koutarou's actions. And that unease having been resolved was the second reason.

What removed her unease was the recent establishment of the Satomi band of knights. This provided Maki with a clear sense of who she was and allowed her to accept this as the place she belonged. As a result, she had returned to her normal self and was able to anticipate Koutarou's actions once again.

This is probably what it's like with your destined person...

However, Maki hadn't noticed that. She was simply wondering why so many happy things were happening.

"It's probably because I'm so simple."

"Please don't ruin my dream. I prefer a more romantic reason."

"But I don't understand romance."

Koutarou smiled wryly and dropped his shoulders.

"You really don't understand?"

Maki giggled and quietly looked up at Koutarou. Seeing those eyes, Koutarou's hand moved by reflex.

"I don't. I don't get it at all."

As Koutarou said that, he placed his hand on top of Maki's head and gently patted her.

"You really do get it, geez..."

Koutarou claimed he didn't understand, but this was exactly what Maki wished for. Maki felt happy as she felt that their hearts were properly reaching one another. She was so happy that she felt like her mind and body would melt from the warmth emitting from Koutarou's hand on her head.

Part 5

In total, there were eight people joining the beetle hunt. They were Koutarou, Sanae, Kiriha, Yurika, Harumi, Clan, Maki and Shizuka. The two that weren't present, Theia and Ruth, were out by the station. They supposedly had some important business to attend to.

A total of 24 beetles had been caught, which meant three beetles per person. Three hours had elapsed since they started, from morning to noon, and it was quite the haul. Of course not everyone had caught the same amount; the most a single person had caught was seven, whilst the least was zero. The group was currently in the middle of showing off their results.

“I-I couldn't even catch a single one...”

“Ho ho ho, there is no need to feel so down, Yurika. I will give you my Kabutonga #2.”

“That's not what I meant, that's not... auu...”

Yurika hadn't caught a single beetle. If she had used magic, she could have caught as many as she wanted, but the results from attempting to capture beetles with her own strength was a big fat zero.

Sanae, who was consoling Yurika, had caught five. She had caught the most among the girls. Since she was able to detect the unique

auras of beetles, she could find beetle after beetle. If she had caught every single one she had found, she would have caught the most by far.

“Harumi, how did the controls feel when catching the bugs?”

“It was a little difficult. Because of the barrier, it was like my fingers had gotten thicker.”

“Hmm... In order to perform any delicate work, the barrier might need to vary in thickness.”

“Ah, that would help. I think it would be very helpful when doing stuff like housework.”

Harumi and Clan had caught one and two beetles respectively. But they were more interested in performing an experiment with PAF than capturing beetles. As a result, more of the time was spent performing adjustments and discussing. Combined, they had caught three beetles between them, so the result wasn't all that bad. Together with their experiment you could say it was a big success.

“Kasagi-san, I'm amazed you can pluck flying beetles out of the air.”

“I can manage as long as they're not female.”

“Why not female?”

“Without the horn, don't you think they look like cockroaches? Especially when they're flying.”

“Ahaha, I can kind of understand.”

Using her physical strength, Shizuka could catch beetles where the other girls couldn't. The most impressive catch she had made was by jumping and catching a flying beetle mid-air, that feat was applauded by everyone. She had caught four in total.

Meanwhile, Maki had caught two. She had always been supporting Koutarou, more precisely she had two beetles in the cage. Considering that she was helping out Koutarou all the time, it wasn't a poor result.

“To think you'd catch seven, as expected from my Onii-chan.”

“Kii, how many did you get?”

“Three. I really can't catch them like you can.”

“Catching three using that method is very well done.”

“Is it that great?”

“Yeah. It is.”

“Ehehehe.”

Koutarou had caught seven, the most amongst everyone in the group. Combined with Maki it was nine, so on average they lost to Sanae. On top of that, Sanae was letting the others know where beetles were, so Koutarou felt like Sanae was the true victor.

Finally, Kiriha had caught three beetles. This was the average of everyone's haul, so it was neither good nor bad. Using her sharp observation skills, she captured all the beetles that the others had let escape.

“Alright, this one looks good.”

“What are you going to do with that beetle?”

“This one is the largest, so I figured I'll give it to Clan.”

“You're giving it to Onee-chan? Why?”

“She wants to show Earth's beetles to the kids on the spaceship. In that case, the bigger the better.”

“Hmm, that's wonderful. Then I'll contribute this female beetle, it's the biggest one after all.”

“That sounds good, I'm sure Clan and the kids will love it.”

“Yeah.”

Smiling and nodding at each other, Koutarou and Kiriha approached Clan.

In the end, Koutarou and the others released most of the beetles. They only needed some beetles for Clan to show the children and some for Koutarou to keep. In total, they kept four beetles, two pairs of a male and a female. After taking a picture of the rest, the remaining 20 were set free for the local children that would be visiting the forest.

“... If we sold them we'd at least get some money...”

Yurika shed tears as she stared at the beetles flying away. To her, the beetles looked like 500 yen coins flying into the forest.

“Nijino Yurika, are you really that poor?”

“There's so many mangas I want... Ahh... the money is flying away...”

“How pitiable, to think this is one of Rainbow Heart's arc wizards...”

Maki, who was by Yurika's side, was troubled. Her rival's pathetic appearance hurt her sense of values as a magical girl. Yurika's predecessor, Nana, was someone who Maki could respect as an enemy.

“Yurika-chan, in that case, why don't you join Satomi-kun's band of knights?”

Shizuka thought of Koutarou as Yurika's legal guardian. With Yurika's personality, there wasn't anyone else who could handle her. And to Koutarou, having a troublesome younger sister would be a big plus. That's why she felt it was necessary for both parties.

“That's right. You'll get a salary and you can use that to buy manga.”

Yurika had her salary as a magical girl deducted to pay for repairs on a building she had destroyed in the past, which Sanae had no sympathies for. But Sanae didn't want to see her friend skimping on food to buy manga, only to eventually starve to death. She believed that Koutarou would do something and pushed for Yurika to join the band of knights. She had no consideration for the quality or dignity of the band of knights dropping.

“... But, but, if I rely anymore on Satomi-san, he won't be able to think of me as a proper girl...”

“It's okay, Koutarou never thought of you as a proper girl from the start.”

“That's not okay at all!!”

Yurika and the others were talking about something completely unrelated to beetles. Koutarou was looking at them from a distance, but he suddenly remembered there was something he wanted to hear about.

“Clan, do you have a moment?”

“What is it?”

Koutarou called out to Clan. She was currently looking into the cage containing the large beetles, smiling as she imagined what kind of reactions the children on the spaceship would show, but when Koutarou spoke her name she looked up right away.

“Is it something serious?”

“Yeah.”

As they looked at each other, their expressions turned serious. One could tell the importance of what was about to be discussed from that. As a result, Kiriha and Harumi who were with them wondered what was going on and looked at each other.

“... I want you to tell me about Theia's father.”

“Theiamillis-san's...”

In that moment, Clan’s expression turned stiff. Koutarou was talking about something far more serious than she had expected.

“Elle said he died in an accident, but was it really an accident?”

A while back, Elfaria had told Koutarou that Theia's father had died in an accident. Back then, Koutarou had simply assumed that was the case, but when he thought back on it, he felt like that wasn't all there was to it.

Elfaria was proclaiming disarmament, and her fiancé had died before their wedding. Considering her situation 20 years ago and the timing of the 'accident', Koutarou couldn't shake this bad feeling he was having.

If he asked Elfaria directly, she would probably laugh it off saying that he was overthinking it. That's why he wanted to ask Clan, someone who belonged to a different political faction.

Fortunately, neither Theia nor Ruth were near. The only ones next to them were the tight-lipped Kiriha and Harumi. This was the perfect timing to ask Clan about the details.

Harumi who had listened in opened her eyes wide. Because she was so kind, just learning that Theia had lost her father was enough for her to feel pain.

“...”

“Kurano-san...”

With Harumi like that, Kiriha wordlessly put her hand on Harumi's shoulder. Feeling that, Harumi collected herself. Koutarou wanting Harumi and Kiriha to listen probably meant something important. That's why she couldn't remain shaken up, she had to properly understand.

“In regards to that, I don't have all the information. My guesses will be mixed in, would you be okay with that?”

Clan spoke with a serious expression. It was an expression she rarely showed recently, the expression of a princess facing something serious.

“Yeah, please tell me. It's important.”

Koutarou was the same. He didn't have the expression of a high school student, but of the Blue Knight. It was something that was necessary now.

“... From the information the Schweiger family has, the military were very active before and after the accident.”

In the past, Theia and Elfaria were Clan's rivals. That's why she had a lot of information about them. Amongst that information was also information about Elfaria's fiance.

“Back then, Elfaria-san's proclamation of disarmament was starting to achieve some results just as she ascended the throne. The public opinion was on her side, and she was about to take the disarmament to the next step. Elfaria-san would marry a big shot from the financial world that kept away from the military to make her position clear. At the same time, she was trying to establish a stronger influence in the financial world.”

“So two people that were for the disarmament would marry and amplify each other's influence...”

“At the very least, that's what we believe. In order to stop the military from going out of control, going that far was necessary. Elfaria never had the time to find her own happiness...”

“Just like empress Alaia...”

“Yes...”

Clan looked down sadly. Since they were both women, she understood how Elfaria felt about marriage. Clan in particular knew who Elfaria truly felt for, so she was painfully aware of how she felt.

“However, that should have been inconvenient for the military.”

There, Kiriha entered the conversation. She urged the conversation forward as Koutarou and Clan stopped as Alaia was brought up. Since this was something they didn't want Yurika and the others to hear, they needed to hurry along. That's why Clan continued right away.

“Yes. That's why they tried intervening using all kinds of methods. They would bribe her fiancé's subordinates, expose scandals regarding those related... regardless of whether or not they were true. The media seemed to enjoy writing their articles.”

“Ridiculous... that's not how the Forthorthe's imperial army should act...”

Koutarou grinded his teeth. He was unusually angry. He had a hard time accepting that the imperial army that he had fought alongside with 2,000 years had distorted into something like this.

“... That must be why empress Elfaria was proclaiming disarmament. To return the military to the military you remember, Satomi-kun...”

Harumi instinctively shed tears. She had inherited Alaia's memories, so she couldn't treat this as someone else's problem. Her tears wouldn't stop as she thought of how Elfaria and Alaia felt.

“And that was when the traffic accident in question happened.”

“Which means... Clan, that accident was...”

“... The Schweiger family sees it as a plot by the military.”

Clan's Schweiger family was different from Theia and Elfaria's Mastir family, and they had different channels for information. Analyzing the information they had gotten through their channels, the Schweiger family reached a conclusion. Elfaria's fiancé's death was an assassination orchestrated by the military and disguised as a traffic accident.

At the time, Elfaria's disarmament was seeing some success, and the populous thought highly of their empress. If the military let Elfaria run free any longer, they would be limited even further and connections with various industries would be cut. To the military who had absorbed part of the industrial world and were developing on their own, this was unacceptable. So they used all kinds of methods to get in Elfaria's way, but even then they couldn't stop her. Regardless of how much they obstructed her, Elfaria didn't stop her attempts to return the military to its original state.

Unable to stop Elfaria, the military finally took to using strong measures, which was the assassination of Elfaria's fiancé. If they couldn't stop Elfaria directly, they would destroy her weaker link. Their prime target was her fiancé. He was a civilian and he had a naïve outlook on his physical and political safety. On top of that, they could stop the two great powers of the disarmament factions from uniting. He was an easy and effective target for the military.

“While there is not enough information to confirm this, the Schweiger family has operated on the assumption that it's the truth ever since the incident.”

“And considering that you haven't come into conflict yet, that assumption is not wrong.”

Kiriha continued where Clan left off, and Clan nodded in response.

“That's right, Kii. There's no real evidence, only circumstantial ones. But the circumstantial evidence built up for all these years quite obviously point towards an assassination.”

“Assassination...”

Harumi struggled to find words. In the play and in Alaia's memories, similar scenes had repeatedly happened near her. It caused Harumi great grief and a silent anger as to why something so unjust could be allowed.

“That's all I needed to hear about the accident. Next, why did Elle give birth to Theia through artificial insemination?”

Koutarou was equally angry. A fierce rage burned in his eyes and he felt a duty to keep the military from doing as they pleased. The Blue Knight resting within Koutarou was about to awaken.

“This is just a guess, but... I believe it was a counter against an assassination. And in fact, ever since then there were no more incidents that are believed to be assassination attempts. She also maintained her connection with the financial world.”

The Schweiger family figured there were two primary reasons as to why Elfaria gave birth to Theia.

The first reason was an expression of will to show that assassinations are useless. With fertilized eggs being preserved, even repeated assassinations would have no use. There was also no point in targeting related parties, the only one to target was Elfaria herself. And even if they did target Elfaria, the Mastir family wouldn't die out. The Schweiger family believed one of the reasons Theia was born was to let the military know that fact. Whether it had an effect or not remained unclear, but ever since then there had been no more incidents that were believed to be attempted assassinations.

The second reason was to strengthen the connection to the disarmament faction in the financial world. Originally that was supposed to have been done through marriage, but the fiancê was killed in an accident. But if Elfaria gave birth to a child with her fiancé's genes, it would work as a strong appeal to the disarmament faction. And with Theia's birth, both sides worked together more than ever and stood against the military.

This also had a secondary, unexpected effect. The fact that Elfaria had stayed in chastity after losing her fiancé and gave birth to Theia through artificial insemination was very positively seen by the citizens. As a result, the public opinion sided with Elfaria even further. Her already high approval rate skyrocketed.

Because of the complex elements intertwined, Elfaria's momentum increased despite the military's plans. In that kind of situation, the military couldn't go against Elfaria's words, nor could the media. Because of this result, the military would need to lay low for a long time before they could take action again.

“Elle couldn't hold back the military even after doing all of that...”

Elfaria had to make use of marriage as a political tool, and she hadn't given birth to Theia out of love.

She knew that what she was doing wasn't right. The girl Koutarou had met in the past hadn't been that foolish. But Forthorthe's military had grown so powerful that she had no choice but to go that far. Elfaria who continued to fight never had a choice.

“Then after almost two decades, the heat around the military had cooled down enough that they were able to take action again. The military is probably this active because they had been waiting all this time.”

“She only managed to buy a couple of years...”

“Elfaria-san should have traversed quite the dangerous path up until now. So dangerous her own marriage didn't even matter.”

Clan looked down once more. A year ago she had felt nothing for this truth, yet now she was taken aback by a heavy sorrow. The current Clan knew how painful a journey that must have been, and how much she had to sacrifice to get here.

“... So she had to do this to keep the country from turning rotten, huh...”

“In the end, she is the same as Alaia-san. She had no choice but to continue fighting, without any concern for her own happiness.”

“... And that has continued for 20 years, huh...”

The problems around Theia and Elfaria were deeply rooted. On top of that, they were currently chased away from their country, living

on the outskirts of space. It was only a matter of time before the military framed them for some crime.

I have to protect them... Theia... Elle... and Forthorthe...

But Koutarou had no intention of backing away. Despite the many hardships ahead, he was planning on forcing through it all.

He wanted to see the girls live their lives happily.

That was why Koutarou was standing here. The reason why he had parted ways with Alaia and returned to the present age.

Part 6

Koutarou and the others left the mountain during the day. While summer had just started, it still got hot during the afternoon. Calling it a day before it becomes too much was an iron rule when it came to fun beetle hunting.

“Sanae, it's hot.”

“It's not hot.”

“Then, it's heavy.”

“It's not heavy.”

“Get off. You don't have to do that after we've been beetle hunting, right?”

“That's why our love is being tested. If you really don't like it then try putting me down.”

“Guess it can't be helped...”

Koutarou was climbing down the mountain while carrying one of the girls. The original plan was to have Clan get a piggyback, but for some reason, Sanae got on his back like it was the natural thing to do. She didn't seem to mind the heat and clung onto his back. Koutarou didn't have any intention of forcibly put her down either, so he let her do as she pleased.

"... I am a little envious of that honesty..."

Harumi was mumbling to herself as she looked at Koutarou and Sanae from behind. She wasn't good at showing her feelings to others, that's why she felt a little envious of Sanae. That was when Kiriha who was nearby replied to Harumi's mumbling.

"Sanae has done that ever since they met, it's sort of her privilege. It's nothing we can imitate."

"I heard that she did that ever since she was a ghost."

"Indeed. However, Sanae isn't the only one with such a privilege, right?"

Kiriha smiled as she said. Kiriha's privilege was a single card. The bonds and feelings reflected in that card showed Kiriha and Koutarou's strong bond.

"Privilege..."

"Sakuraba-senpai's case would be the knitting society, right?"

That was where Yurika joined in. She had on a cheerful smile and gently poked Harumi with her shoulder. She knew that the knitting society was a special place to Harumi where she could be alone with Koutarou.

“N-Nijino-san!”

“There's no need to be embarrassed. Everyone already knows.”

“But in that case, Yurika-chan is at the top.”

“Huh? I am?”

Yurika blinked in confusion as Shizuka pointed that out. After giggling a little, Shizuka told her why.

“Whenever Satomi-kun is about to start something, he always invites Yurika-chan first.”

“And I always suffer for it! It's not a privilege at all!”

“It's a luxury, Nijino Yurika.”

“Even Maki-chan! You're wrong! A privilege is something warmer and kinder! Painful stuff is not a privilege!”

“I understand how you feel, Yurika.”

Koutarou and the others were descending from the mountain in a harmonious atmosphere. It was just another summer day. However, Koutarou and the others knew how valuable that was, and they prayed that days like this would come forever.

However, there were those who were trying to destroy that peace. The first ones to notice it were the two haniwas that served Kiriha.

“Ho! Ho Ho-! This is bad Ho-!”

“Ane-san, sorry for intruding on your fun Ho!”

Karama and Korama had been using camouflage to keep themselves hidden up until now, but as they sensed someone approaching, they appeared in front of Koutarou and the others. If what approached them were normal people they wouldn't have said anything, but sadly, the people were not normal.

“We have detected something on our spiritual energy sensor Ho! The reaction is weak, it is most likely a sensor that they are using Ho!”

“The distance is 200 meters ahead! It seems they are climbing up the mountain path Ho!”

The approaching people was using spiritual energy technology. In other words, they were People of the Earth, or those related to them. They weren't normal, and a quick reaction was necessary.

“Karama, Korama, class II stealth mode. Depending on the situation, we might use sleep mode.”

“Got it!”

“Understood Ho-!”

Kiriha swiftly gave Karama and Korama the order to conceal themselves. At this point, Kiriha suspected that it was likely that the ones approaching were hostile. The reason for that is because Kiriha had forbidden her subordinates that had come to the surface with her from using spiritual energy technology. Because of that, since the ones closing in were using spiritual energy technology, there was a high chance of the ones approaching being from the radical faction.

“Nee-san, this is strange Ho! Their spiritual energy is too unstable. Even if it's a sensor, the resolution would be too weak Ho!”

“I remember this spiritual pattern Ho-! With a 90% probability, it's that fun group of five we've met before Ho!”

“What...”

However, Kiriha's expectations had been betrayed. The ones approaching were neither ally nor foes.

They were from a third faction.

Part 7

Koutarou and the others had been on edge since Karama and Korama's warning, but once the five in question appeared, that tension easily dissolved. While they weren't close, they were people that they had met before.

“What, it's just them...”

“Satomi-kun?”

“What? Do you know them?”

The only ones who hadn't were Maki and Clan. They hadn't seen them before so they looked at the group of five with confused expressions.

“We met them when we were helping out at a hero show a while back.”

“Ah, I've heard Kii mention that before.”

“Then they're actors?”

“Probably.”

As Koutarou was explaining the circumstances to the two, the group if five noticed Koutarou and the others.

“Ah, Kenichi-niichan, aren't those people...”

“They are!! What an unusual place to meet again...”

“No way?! Isn't that Baron-sama and the others?! Damn, if I knew about this, I'd put some more makeup on!!”

“There it is, Megumi's sickness is acting up again.”

“Megu-chan, you're beautiful the way you are.”

Noticing Koutarou and the others, the group of five ran up to them. Their expressions were friendly as if they were meeting with old friends. Koutarou and the others were the same and approached them with short steps.

“Long time no see, everyone!”

The healthy looking young man in the front was Kenichi, the leader of the five.

“Thank you very much for your guidance last year!”

Following him was the shortest of the five, a young boy by the name of Kotarou. He was younger than Kenichi, but the smartest of the group. His hobby was games.

“Ba~ron-samaaa~! You are as manly as always!”

Behind them was the only girl of the group, Megumi, smiling. She easily fell in love with others.

“Megu-chan, you're drooling! Baron-san will hate you if you're like that!”

The giant chasing after Megumi with a handkerchief was Daisaku. He was a man who ate a lot, but he was surprisingly quite sensitive and often covered for the others when they might go out of control. In other words, the leader in name was Kenichi, while the actual leader was Daisaku.

“Don't get too excited, you guys. They'll take you for country bumpkins.”

The man sending cold glances at the other four was Hayato. He liked to act cool, but things often didn’t go as planned thanks to his showy personality. By the way, he was from a village in the mountains, and was the biggest country bumpkin of the five.

These five were always together as they formed a five-man team. The team's name was the Sun Squad, Sun Rangers. They were heroes who had their start two years ago.

“They're still the same... hmm?”

Koutarou was feeling nostalgic as he saw the Sun Rangers acting the same as last year, but he felt like something was off as he looked at them running.

What’s with this sensation?

Koutarou gave the five another look. As he did, he soon found out what was so off. Their appearance as they ran was a lot steadier than it had been last year.

“Impressive.”

“It looks like they've trained quite a bit since then. It's like they're completely different people.”

Shizuka had noticed the same thing and was also impressed. That was just how big the Sun Rangers' change had been. There was a stability in their running form and an appropriate position for their center of gravity which were supported by well-trained muscles. They were clearly different from last year. It was proof of their hard training.

And it's not just their movements, they're not showing any openings. They're also paying attention to their allies. Their teamwork has improved considerably. Did they do a lot of training for actual combat?

Koutarou's intuition told him that they had put up with a lot of unprecedented training for action actors. They seemingly improved their capabilities as soldiers, even though that wasn't something an actor needed. As a result, just the sight of them running was enough to persuade others that they were heroes. Koutarou was surprised by their ambition.

"Long time no see you guys. It looks like you've trained yourself quite a bit."

"You can tell?!"

Koutarou honestly mentioned that he was impressed, which caused Kenichi's eyes to sparkle with excitement.

"Yeah, you look completely different. You've gotten quite a bit stronger."

"It's an honor! We tried our hardest to get even one step closer to you!"

"But still, Kenichi-niichan, Baron-san really is exceptional. I can tell now that we're standing here face to face."

“Of course! Don't lump Baron-sama in with other men! We wouldn't be a match for Baron-sama just from training a little! Ahh~, I want to hurry up and get beaten to a pulp by Baron-sama!!”

“... Daisaku, it seems like Megumi's sickness is worse than usual today, what's going on?”

“This is from before. Ever since the day we went to Baron-san's play, her symptoms have gotten worse.”

The Sun Rangers were unable to hide their excitement from meeting Koutarou in such an unexpected place. But Koutarou wasn't sure what was going on.

“... So, Sun Rangers, what are you doing here? Is it work? Or are you training?”

Troubled, Koutarou asked Kenichi for their circumstances. As he did, the Sun Rangers excitement died down a little as Kenichi answered for the group.

“Well, I can't go into details, but we are looking for something in this area.”

The Sun Rangers was a secret organization created by the government to combat invaders. They had come here today on a mission. Their mission was to find the invaders' base. However, they couldn't reveal that to civilians like Koutarou and the others.

“I see. You sure have it hard.”

However, Koutarou didn't think much of it. He figured they were only looking for a place to record for their hero show. Being obliged to keep secrets because of a contract was common sense for work.

They're searching the area with a spiritual energy sensor... Could the radical faction be planning something on the surface? Or... though I don't want to believe it, could they already have a base here?

Only Kiriha's expression changed after hearing what the Sun Rangers said. Only she had noticed who the Sun Rangers really were. But unless something major happened, Kiriha wouldn't make contact with them. If possible, she didn't want them to find out about her.

"... Karama, maintain stealth mode and follow them. I want to know their objective."

"... Understood Ho-"

Kiriha ordered one of her haniwas to follow the Sun Rangers. The chances were high that their movements were related to the underground people. She couldn't leave them alone. In contrast to Kiriha's complex emotions, Koutarou and the Sun Rangers were care freely chatting away.

"B-By the way, why is Baron-sama here?!"

"Megu-chan, calm down a little."

"But, but! We finally meet again!"

"We're here for this."

"Beetles?"

"Yeah. We want to show Japanese beetles to the children from Clan's country, Clan is that girl in glasses over there."

“That's wonderful. You've caught some big beetles too.”

“Yeah, amazing isn't it?”

“Yes.”

Hearing that Koutarou was out capturing beetles for children from a foreign country, Kenichi's expression brightened up. The battle between the Sun Rangers and invaders could be called a battle against foreign countries. In that regard, one could say that Koutarou was improving their relations with a foreign country and preemptively stopping battles. In other words, they shared the same goal, but Koutarou was one step ahead. That's why Kenichi thought it was wonderful.

We should strive to be like this as well... for that end, we have to give it our all now!

In order for them to become like Koutarou, they had to complete their own mission. Determination burnt fiercely in Kenichi's eyes.

“Niichan, it's about time we...”

“You're right. Everyone, we're returning to work.”

“Eeeeh?! I finally reunited with Baron-sama, but it's going to end without me being beaten up to a pulp?!”

“Let's bear with it, Megu-chan. If you abandon work, Baron-san will hate you.”

“We don't have much time. We can't just sit here celebrating our reunion.”

It wasn't just Kenichi who had renewed his determination. The other four... the other three shared that feeling.

“That's right. Can I ask you one last thing, Baron-san?”

“What is it, Red Shine?”

“Did you see any strange place, thing, or person over where you were capturing beetles? I don't mind even if it's something minor.”

“I... didn't really see anything that stood out. How about you guys?”

Koutarou didn't have any recollection of anything strange, and when he checked with the girls, all seven shook their heads.

“No one else has either, huh. Sorry, Red Shine, we're of no help.”

“No, that's not true.”

Kenichi didn't get the information he wanted, but he didn't seem discouraged. The Sun Rangers hadn't just trained their bodies, but also their minds.

“I appreciate your cooperation. I am also glad we could meet again.”

“Me too.”

“Then we must be going!”

Kenichi and his four allies saluted in an orderly fashion and left. They looked completely different from before; they looked like actual heroes.

“Hey, Koutarou.”

Sanae climbed up Koutarou's back and muttered.

“Those guys are strange as always, but... I'm sure a lot of things happened to them too.”

“Yeah, probably.”

Just like Koutarou and the others had grown, so too had the Sun Rangers, and visibly so. The backs of the group of five were dignified and powerful.

The Underground and the Surface

Part 1

Saturday, July 3

Once the Sun Rangers could no longer be seen, Koutarou and the others began climbing down the mountain again. While they were tired from the beetle hunting, the unexpected meeting left everyone in a bright mood.

“Sakuraba-senpai, how is your body holding up?”

“Thank you for worrying, Nijino-san. Thanks to Clan-san's invention, I can still go on. Thanks to you too, Clan-san.”

“W-We can't be too overconfident. It's still just at the prototype stage.”

“Don't get so embarrassed, glasses. It's at times like this that you boast!”

“By the way, Aika-san, did you leave the band of knight's uniform to Theia-chan and Ruth-san?”

“Yes, I don't know Forthorthe's style. In fact, I thought it would be best that way.”

“We're talking about Theia and Ruth-san, I can't tell what will come out, but it won't be anything useful.”

However, amongst them, only Kiriha's expression remained dark.

To her, the meeting with the Sun Rangers wasn't just a reunion. The fact that the Sun Rangers, the surface defence force, was moving

was proof that the radical faction was making moves. She couldn't simply smile and enjoy the reunion. As a result, she now had the expression of a commander.

“Nee-san, I've gotten a message from Karama Ho. The Sun Rangers are moving past where we were hunting beetles and heading deeper into the forest Ho.”

“Have Karama continue following them.”

“Roger!”

Kiriha was using the haniwas to follow the Sun Rangers and planned for the future.

Since they were using a close range spiritual energy sensor, they should have an idea of where to look. They either pursued them after a battle, or they had a clue from the start...

Kiriha predicted that the Sun Rangers had information that her enemies, the radical faction, were hiding in this area. The basis for Kiriha's line of thinking was because of the accuracy of their sensor. The accuracy of their sensor was far lower than the sensor built into the haniwas; trying to find them without any leads with that sensor was like searching for a needle in a haystack. It was more likely that they had a clue that lead them here rather than them just happening to search this area.

In that case, there was a point in following the Sun Rangers. Karama, who had a more accurate sensor, might be able to find the radical faction before the Sun Rangers did. With the radicals making moves underground as well, Kiriha couldn't pass up on this chance.

“I need to find something and make the first move...”

Kiriha normally didn't like fighting, yet she had to actively obstruct the radical faction. The situation was beginning to turn that bad that she had to accept that contradiction. If the radical faction had built a base on the surface, or if they were in the middle of a large-scale operation, the policy for dealing with them might need a major revision.

“Nee-san, this is bad Ho!”

“What is it?!”

And that danger turned even more real by the news from Korama.

“An emergency message from Chief Daiha Ho! Shijima Tayuma has escaped Ho!”

“What?!”

Shijima Tayuma, a young member of the radical faction. Among the People of the Earth, he was especially elitist and harbored a lot of hate towards the surface dwellers. Last year, Tayuma fought Kiriha and lost, and was sent to a prison underground. Yet now he had escaped. Kiriha knew just what that meant.

Kiriha's battle had right at this moment begun.

Part 2

The ones who had broken Tayuma out of prison was a man and woman rarely seen underground. The young man was tall and blonde, wore a suit and had a foreign atmosphere to him. The woman had a sharp glance and wore an exposing dark indigo

colored outfit. Since the underground people had a simplistic look, Tayuma looked very plain next to the two.

Having broken out of prison with the two's help, Tayuma was currently on the run with them. Tayuma and the others were still underground, so the prison break wasn't a complete success yet. Currently they were hiding in the basement of a certain building. A vehicle to escape in was going to be meeting them in a few minutes, so they needed to standby there. Though the basement was dim and dirty, this was the first time since the breakout that they had been able to rest.

"... It's been awhile since we last met face to face, indigo soldier."

"Well, getting into contact has been difficult lately."

Tayuma began by talking to the woman. Her name was Maya, and the two had been cooperating for over ten years. Normally, Tayuma hated the surface dwellers, however Maya was an exception. She was from the the seventh tribe of the People of the Earth, mentioned in the legends. In other words, she was technically from the People of the Earth. That's why they could cooperate without Tayuma's pride being hurt.

"So Maya, who is this man?"

However, that wasn't the case for the man with Maya. Since Tayuma believed that the People of the Earth were superior, being saved by a surface dweller harmed his pride.

"He is Elexis. We became partners a while back ago. I can't go into details, but I can guarantee that he is not Japanese."

“My name is Elexis. It's a pleasure meeting you, your Excellency Shijima Tayuma.”

Elexis elegantly bowed. He was used to having people shower him with hostility, having lived in the business world. He wasn't shaken in the slightest.

“Muu...”

“I understand that it's hard to accept, but please look at the reality. It is because of him that we are able to mass produce weapons. Isn't it obvious that he is not a normal person?”

“That's true... but...”

Maya and Tayuma, with the radical faction backing them, were only able to enter the final stages of their plan because of Elexis's cooperation. The worker machines that Elexis had brought in were far superior to both that of the machines on the surface and of the People of the Earth.

Thanks to that, they were able to overcome the technological wall in their way and were able to considerably shorten the time their plan would take.

“And he is my partner. If you insult him, it is the same as insulting me.”

“... I understand. I am sorry, Elexis. I formally apologize. I am also grateful for your cooperation.”

“Your words are too good for me.”

In the end, Tayuma broke. To him, Maya was of the People of the Earth and held a strong power. Insulting his countryman was the same as insulting himself. Besides, Elexis was a foreigner, and the technology he had was far superior. He was clearly quite different from the Japanese that had chased the People of the Earth underground. Tayuma and the other's goals were to fight the surface dwellers of Japan. That's why, with Maya's guarantee, there was no point in pursuing who Elexis was.

"By the way, how is the factory progressing?"

With the matter of Elexis settled, Tayuma got back on track. In the end, the war on the surface was more important to him.

"It is operating smoothly. 95% of the scheduled production has already been completed... Well, that's why we came to pick you up."

"That is much faster than what we expected."

"We'll go over the details when we arrive at our destination. It would be better if you see for yourself."

"Which means that our destination is the factory on the surface."

"That's correct. The invincible army awaits you, their commander, there."

Listening to Maya's report, Tayuma showed a twisted smile. It was a cruel and ugly smile filled with grudge and envy.

Having escaped from the prison, the three headed towards mountains by the suburbs of Kitsushou Harukaze city. That was the base that Elexis had erected when he first came to Earth, and the

simple production he had brought with him had been left there. And in order for the radical faction to make use of that facility, they created a large-scale factory. Tayuma's first impression of the factory was satisfaction.

“Seeing it in person, I must say, it's quite a masterpiece! So this is my army!”

In the warehouse of the factory were mechanical soldiers making use of the same technology used for Maya's body, though it was nowhere near as human-like. Since they were currently in the process of being moved to a different base, there was less than half of their original number, but there was still over 1000 soldiers.

“We have already moved our portion, so these are without a doubt your troops.”

“So these will be equipped with your clan's techniques, I think you called it magic. I can't keep myself from laughing just imagining the sight of them advancing. So this is the masterpiece of the People of the Earth! Fuahahaha!!”

“Regarding that, the trailers used for transporting the soldiers to our base will return with our weapons.”

Once the production of the weapons, including the mechanical soldiers, reached 95% completion, Darkness Rainbow's portion had been completed. After sending that portion to her own base, Maya headed out to rescue Tayuma. She was being cautious so that in the case of something unexpected happening, she wouldn't suffer any losses. The same could be said about the magical weapons that Darkness Rainbow would share with Tayuma and the radicals. Under the pretext that obtaining a mode of transport was difficult, the spiritual energy weapons were transported first. On the way

back, the magical weapons would be transported. While Maya and Tayuma appeared to be cooperating on the surface, they were protecting their own profits first.

“Once the trailers returns, all preparations will be complete. Maguz-sama will be pleased.”

There, Tayuma mentioned the name Maguz. That Maguz was the leader of the radical faction, but rarely showed themselves in public, as they controlled everything from the shadows. As a result, even though the conservatives caught radicals, they didn't get any leads. All they knew of was the codename Maguz.

“By the way, Tayuma, it was that person who requested your rescue.”

“So it really was Maguz-sama. I better send my thanks later.”

“While you're at it, let them know that it was a good deal.”

“I understand... Then I will go report and send my thanks to Maguz-sama right away.”

He had safely arrived at his base and confirmed the condition of the factory. It was about time Tayuma returned to work. A large-scale attack on the surface would soon be carried out.

“Elexis and I will go perform the final adjustments on that.”

“It's already complete?!”

“That is also around 95% complete. That's why we're making the final adjustments.”

“I see, then I'll leave—”

That was when a jarring alarm rang out throughout the factory.

“Intruder alert! I repeat, intruder alert! It is believed that someone has broken past the eastern fence and entered the site! The defenses are to find and dispose of this intruder right away!”

“So they reached this place... The surface dwellers aren't just all idiots as well!”

Tayuma, Maya, and Elexis left their reports for later and headed towards the operation room.

There was no longer any time to casually chat away.

They needed to find the intruders as quickly as possible and prevent information from being leaked.

Part 3

The Sun Rangers had been able to find the factory largely by chance. But their efforts had allowed them to be at the right place at the right time. This was a fortune their efforts had delivered.

“We did it! There really was a base! It's just like you said, Kotarou!”

“I thought it was strange. They're underground people, yet recently they were flying in the sky.”

The Sun Rangers had fought against the underground people on several occasions. However, they weren't attacks made public as they were small-scale attacks like sabotage of communal facilities.

And after a minor skirmish, the underground people would withdraw.

However, as of late a change had occurred when the underground people escaped. In the past they would escape towards the underground, but now there were times that they escaped into the sky. And the direction they would fly away in had a regularity to it. There, the Sun Rangers thoroughly searched that direction.

With their low accuracy sensor, they had not found anything after looking for several days, but today was different. As they persevered in their search, they discovered a dot on the screen of their sensor. Since that dot was moving swiftly, they hurriedly gave chase so they wouldn't lose it.

They had no way of knowing, but that reaction was the vehicle that Tayuma and the others had used to escape. Having focused on losing their underground pursuers, they sped up once they reached the surface. Since the engine used spiritual energy, by raising the speed, they increased the output, allowing the Sun Rangers sensor to detect them.

Tayuma and the others had made three mistakes. They underestimated the accuracy of the accuracy of the surface dwellers' sensors; they didn't consider the possibility that the surface dwellers might be investigating nearby and they had been in too much of a rush.

The sensor's quality didn't matter when they were that close. Increasing their speed caused them to use up a lot of spiritual energy, making them stand out. Effort, carelessness, coincidence, and haste. All of these elements intertwined, allowing the Sun Rangers to find Tayuma's factory, the enemy's base.

“But what do we do now, Kenichi? This is definitely not a normal base. They're making something on a large scale.”

Hayato was wearing a blue battle suit and looked through the scope of his rifle. On the other end of his scope was what was believed to be the enemy base. It definitely had the feel of a military base, but it also looked like a factory. It was taking in a lot of water from the river and several chimneys could be seen, with several power plants on the inside. It was clear that something was being made inside.

“That said, it's too big for just the five of us to attack.”

“I think so too. If we try to attack, we're only going to end up regretting it.”

Megumi, wearing a pink suit, and Daisaku, wearing a yellow suit, both wanted to play it safe. The base was too big, and an attack wouldn't work with just the five of them. They believed calling for reinforcements would be best.

“So we're just going to leave without doing anything? They are definitely up to no good.”

“I agree with Hayato. We can't return empty-handed. Remember what professor Roppongi said the other day? A large-scale battle might be close.”

The blue Hayato and red Kenichi had a more active opinion. Having found the enemy base, they wanted to at least cause some damage to it. With a large-scale battle possibly around the corner, they might end up at a disadvantage if they left without doing anything. It wasn't like they wanted to charge in without a plan.

“Then it's two against two.... Kotarou, what do you think?”

“Hmm...”

Kotarou wearing a green suit scratched his head as Kenichi asked him. After thinking for a while, he eventually slapped his hands together.

“That's right. Kenichi-niichan, what if we approach it using the middle ground of both opinions.”

“Middle ground? What do you mean?”

“We'll take a look inside the factory, we'll check what they're up to and then withdraw. With that, we won't have to force ourselves to attack, and we won't return without anything to show for it.”

“Kotarou, you've been on a roll lately.”

“Hehehehe.”

Kotarou proudly puffed up his chest having been praised by Kenichi. He was a small boy, but he looked a little larger now.

“Everyone, I'm thinking of going with Kotarou's idea. Do you mind?”

Kenichi looked at the group to confirm their intentions. There were no objections as everyone nodded their heads. Kotarou's opinion suited everyone.

“With that decided, let's go everyone!”

“”Yeah!””

With Kenichi at the front, the Sun Rangers carefully approached the factory. Since they didn't want to be found before they could scout it out, they needed to make slow and deliberate moves.

“It's just that this isn't very hero-like. Baron-san might get angry if he saw us now.”

“Kotarou, Baron-san would understand. This is for the sake of the children.”

“Yeah, you're right.”

Like Kotarou said, sneaking wasn't very hero-like. If anything, it was more villainous. However, their spirits shone on heroically.

Part 4

Around the factory was an electrified fence. Carelessly touching it would shock you, yet if they cut it, they would be found by the enemy shortly thereafter.

“Alright. Everyone, you can cross over now.”

However, that was where the giant, Daisaku, showed off his talent. Using a cable to reroute the electricity, they could pass without cutting the fence. At first glance, he looked to be the clumsiest of the bunch, but in reality he was the most dexterous of them all.

“Thank you, Daisaku-kun. Thanks for all your work.”

Megumi smiled as she helped put away Daisaku's tools.

“It's not as difficult as it looks, Megu-chan.”

Unfamiliar with machinery, Megumi held quite a bit of respect for Daisaku. Partially thanks to that, Daisaku was the man she favored the most, not including her sickness. However, she herself was not aware of this, and it would probably take quite a while before love blooms.

“I'll go first. Give me some space before you follow.”

“Be careful, Kenichi.”

“Yeah!”

Kenichi lightly waved at Hayato before passing through the hole opened up in the fence.

It was the job of the leader, Kenichi, to jump into danger first. The vice leader, Hayato brought up the rear. If the enemy appeared front or back, the leader or vice leader would be able to deal with it. It was a formation that had naturally formed over these past few months.

“... Everyone.”

Having passed through the fence, Kenichi hid in the shadow of a nearby container and waved his allies over. The Sun Rangers passed through the fence one at a time, and after three seconds they were all by Kenichi's side.

“This is where it gets difficult.”

After confirming that everyone was here, Kenichi poked his face out from the container to take a look. There were no places to hide further up ahead. They would need to rush all the way up to the

building. Since he could see armed underground people patrolling, they needed to time it right.

However, they didn't get a chance to time it, as all of a sudden a loud siren sounded throughout the entire factory, causing the soldiers' movement to become hurried.

"Intruder alert! I repeat, intruder alert! It is believed that someone has broken past the eastern fence and entered the site! The defenses are to find and dispose of this intruder right away!"

"They found us?!"

"Calm down, Kenichi! Judging from the alert, they've only found out about the fence!"

Kenichi turned pale, but Hayato calmed him down. Neither the contents of the alert nor the underground people's movements indicated that the Sun Rangers had been found.

"Niichan, they might have cameras checking the fence regularly. It's much cheaper than randomly increasing the security devices."

"What do we do, Kenichi-kun? It's going to be hard to scout out the factory now."

"Daisaku-kun is right! We can't scout while dealing with that many people!"

The enemies were steadily increasing. The Sun Rangers had gotten far stronger compared to last year, but even then they couldn't deal with several dozen enemies. Doing what they had originally planned would be dangerous.

“Alright, here's what we do. Me, Hayato, and Kotarou will attract their attention. During that time, Megumi and Daisaku will take pictures of the inside of the factory. Once that's over, escape right away! We'll escape while attracting attention!”

Since the underground people didn't know how many the Sun Rangers were, they should be able to fool them with just the three of them. Besides, there was less risk with them escaping that way.

“Okay, be careful, Kenichi-kun!”

“You too! Let's go, Hayato, Kotarou!”

With their meeting done, Kenichi and the other two jumped out from the shadow of the container. Once there was some distance between them, Daisaku and Megumi headed in the opposite direction. On their way, they saw a lot of underground people heading towards Kenichi and the others.

“I hope they'll be okay...”

“Don't worry, Megu-chan. Let's just focus on our own job.”

Megumi was worried, but Daisaku made her switch gears.

“You're right, sorry, Daisaku-kun. Let's do our best, the two of us.”

“Yeah.”

They didn't have the time to worry about Kenichi and the others. They had their own dangers to overcome.

Part 5

While they had acted all cool, the moment Kenichi and the others left the container, they immediately got pushed back hard.

“They're shooting! They're not even asking questions!”

“Kenichi-niichan, there's more coming from the left too!”

“Kenichi, Kotarou! Don't go to the right, a different squad is flanking us!”

While there was still some distance between them, there were underground people everywhere. On top of that, the underground people were armed with rifles and were mercilessly firing at the three. Because of the endlessly appearing underground people and their repeated firing, the three were being cornered, little by little.

“Hayato, where do we run?!”

“Just focus on running forward!”

The three continued running forward while shots screeched past their ears. All they could do right now was run around. They had to buy time for Megumi and Daisaku to fulfill their mission.

“Niichan, something's strange!”

It was then that Kotarou noticed something odd about the situation.

“What's strange?!”

“It's their guns, they're—”

“Uwah?!”

“Are you okay, Kotarou?!”

“I-I'm fine! It only hit my helmet! But you understand now right?! The guns they're using aren't firing the usual mysterious beam!”

“You're right... I wonder why they're using normal guns today.”

The abnormality that Kotarou had noticed was the weapons the underground people were using.

There was no doubt that the enemies were underground people, one could tell from their shinto priest like clothes, which they wore body armor on top of. It was a style they had seen before.

Up until now, the weapon that the underground people used had been spiritual energy beam rifles. It was a powerful beam rifle that gathered and focused spiritual energy before releasing it. Normally, there might be a different weapon amongst the troops they fought, but the beam rifle was their primary weapon.

Yet today, the underground people were using rifles that fired bullets. While they had changed into a more commonly seen weapon, it was still suspicious.

“But those aren't normal guns!”

“What do you mean, Hayato?!”

“The fired bullets are curving to chase after us! They're like magic bullets!”

Hayato used a rifle to fight. That's why he was the first to notice the abnormality with the enemies' weapons. He first noticed that the direction the rifle was pointed at, and the bullets impact point were

different. At first he assumed he had missed something, but when the same thing happened time after time again, he understood that wasn't the case.

It was bizarre, but the bullets fired would change their trajectory after being fired.

While the change wasn't large, accurate fire was possible even on the run. Hayato thought back to the trajectory of the bullet fired in the assassination of a certain president. While it was just slight, it was far from realistic that a bullet would change direction.

“It seems like it's their new weapon!”

“So their power has lowered, but it's gotten easier to hit, huh?”

“If they get any closer with those weapons, we'll get hit in no time! Hayato, Kotarou, don't stop running no matter what!”

Since the enemy had an overwhelming number, Kenichi and the others had no intention of fighting them up front, yet just running around the factory site was getting hard.

Who knows how long we’ll last...

As a strong anxiety started taking root in Kenichi, Megumi's voice entered his helmet through the built-in communications device.

“Kenichi, we're done on our end! We're withdrawing!”

“Understood! We'll withdraw as well! I'll contact you about the meeting point later!”

“Be careful!”

After reporting only what needed to be reported right away, Megumi's communication ended. She didn't have the room to go into details either. But the good news raised the three's morale.

"Niichan, let's hurry up and get out of here!"

"Hayato, use the grenade on your rifle to blow a hole in the fence up ahead!"

"Leave it to me!"

Hayato readied his rifle and fired at the fence.

Along with a light recoil and some spewed out fire, the underslung grenade launcher fired.

The grenade hit the fence where Hayato had aimed and blew open a large hole. The three sprinted straight towards the hole. It was their only escape path.

"Hayato, you go first! Kotarou, goes next!"

"Understood!"

"What about you, Niichan?!"

"I'll go last! Just in— hah?!"

Kenichi's precaution of going last while watching their backs paid off as he barely managed to prevent the surprise attack from an assailant not making any sound.

"I won't go down that easily!!"

Kenichi swung the single handed sword in his right hand and repeatedly fired the handgun in his left at the assailant. But the assailant elegantly jumped backwards and dodged the bullets.

“W-What's with this guy?!”

The assailant had a mechanical appearance, overall it had a humanoid shape. It was about as tall as an average grown man. However, looking at it closely, the limbs were too thin, as if they were just bones. On top of that, the hands and feet were equipped with large claws, making it look quite inhuman. Thanks to the metallic sheen one could tell it was a machine, but it was quite different from the humanoid robots that Japanese corporations made.

“The underground people's killer robot huh... damn it.”

Kenichi frowned and held his side with his left hand. There was a large wound there; the assailant, the underground people's mechanical soldier, had cut him up as it jumped away. Despite its bony appearance, it was strong and quick. Kenichi believed he had prevented the attack, but the mechanical soldier was one step ahead. If it wasn't for his combat suit, the wound would have been fatal, though the wound was still deep and he spilled a lot of blood.

Not good... I can’t escape like this... I’ll have to–

Kenichi jumped back and stood with his back facing the hole in the fence,

“Kenichi, what are you doing?! Hurry up!”

“Hayato, Kotarou, you two go! I'll buy you time!”

Kenichi figured that at this rate they would be wiped out. Even if the three of them fought together, it would take time to defeat the mechanical soldier. During that time, the underground people would arrive. That said, he didn't want to endure attacks from the enemy giving chase and have them target the five as they grouped up. In order to prevent that, somebody needed to stay behind and slow down the mechanical soldier. Kenichi believed that since he had been injured, he was the most suitable for the job.

“You can't, Kenichi-niichan!”

“If I don't, nobody will return! Quit your yappering and go! Return to base with as much information as possible!”

As Kenichi said that, the mechanical soldier attacked. While Kenichi did his best with his sword and gun, he was clearly at a disadvantage. Kenichi's was repeatedly wounded from the mechanical soldier's claws.

“Kotarou!”

“Yeah!”

Hayato and Kotarou began running, however, it wasn't because they were obeying Kenichi's orders. Instead they were running towards Kenichi. They passed through the hole in the fence and entered the factory site once more.

“You idiots, what are you doing?!”

“I won't let you hog all the spotlight, Kenichi! Being cool is my job!”

“Daisaku-niichan and Megumi-neechan will bring the information back.”

“Do you understand what you're doing?!”

“We know. We just can't leave you behind!”

“Niichan, we all came this far together. Let's stay together until the end.”

“You guys...”

However, regardless of how much of an advantage they gained against the mechanical soldier, it was just a win on the surface. Before they could defeat it, they would be surrounded by the underground people.

“... Guess it can't be helped. In that case, let's give it our all. Depending on our efforts, the incoming fight will become easier.”

“That's good. That's more like Red Shine.”

“I wish Baron-san would have heard Niichan's lines. He definitely would have praised you.”

At this point, the three knew that there was no turning back. They desperately steeled themselves, ready to take as many enemies as possible with them. That was their duty. They were soldiers who protected the peace. They were completely different from what they had been in the past. They took pride in their job.

“You're absolutely right! Well said, Red Shine!”

That voice belonged to neither Kenichi, Hayato, nor Kotarou. It wasn't Daisaku's nor Megumi's neither. The moment they heard that voice, the mechanical soldier in front of Kenichi was cut in half.

“Eh?!”

As the mechanical soldier's two pieces fell, a boy wielding a large sword and wearing a beautiful blue armor appeared.

“It looks like you've become real heroes in just a few months.”

“Baron-san!”

The boy that cut the enemy in half was Koutarou. Surprised by his sudden appearance, Kenichi was at a loss for words and remained motionless. He was surprised both by Koutarou and the fact that he had easily cut the soldier in half. As Kenichi remained motionless, the underground people rained fire down upon him. That was where the black haired girl, Kiriha, who was standing next to Koutarou,quickly gave an order.

“Karama, Korama, Spiritual Energy Field to maximum output!!”

“Roger!”

“Leave it to us Ho-!”

In the next moment, two haniwas floated up in front of Kenichi. The haniwas created a shield made from yellow light and protected Kenichi.

“This is bad, Koutarou! These attacks aren't based on spiritual energy!”

However, that shield of light, that barrier, was already starting to collapse. That was partially because of the amount of bullets, but also because the haniwas' barrier was the most effective against spiritual energy-based attacks. Since the weapons used this time weren't based on spiritual energy, the barrier wouldn't last for long.

“It's okay, leave it to me!”

Next up was a girl with silver hair, Harumi. She closed her eyes, held her hands in front of her chest spoke mysterious words as if they were song. This was ancient Forthorthe, used in the activation of magic.

“Gather, spirits of water! Dance, spirits of wind! Combine these two powers and appear, spirits of lightning!”

As her incantation progressed, the white light enveloping Harumi grew stronger. As if resonating with that, Koutarou's sword began emitting the same colored light.

“Like a coiled snake, like a rising tornado, show yourself! Whirl! Thunder Spiral!”

Having finished her incantation, Harumi opened her eyes wide and thrust her hands forward. As she did, a giant coil several meters in

diameter that was made from red light appeared from her stretched out hands. The red coil that had suddenly appeared had a powerful electromagnetic current, and it twisted the trajectory of the oncoming bullets through electromagnetic induction. As a result, the bullets didn't even reach the haniwas' barrier.

“What is this?!”

Kenichi was in a fluster as odd events happened one after another.

“Now's not the time to be surprised! Run away!”

“Y-Yes!”

However, Kenichi remembered the situation as Koutarou roared at him. The enemy was right in front of him. Figuring out just who Koutarou is could wait for later. There, Kenichi hurriedly gave his allies orders.

“Hayato, Kotarou, we're leaving!”

“G-Got it!”

“I don't really understand, but thank you, Baron-san!”

His allies seemed to be equally confused as he was, but they obediently followed Kenichi's orders. The two passed through the hole in the fence and left the factory site.

“Red Shine, I'll lend you a hand.”

“Thanks.”

The wounded Kenichi borrowed Shizuka's shoulder and chased after his allies.

“You've been beaten up quite a bit. Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I'm okay.”

Sanae joined the two and used her spiritual powers to perform some emergency treatment on Kenichi.

“Clan, give me a smoke screen!”

“Smoke grenade fired!”

“Yurika, stop the enemy from moving!”

“Okay! Ice Burn – Modifier – Effective Area Large!”

“Aika-san—”

“Orb of Fire!!”

Koutarou and the others then followed after the others after obstructing the enemy as much as they could.

It hadn't been a coincidence that Koutarou and the other appeared as Kenichi and the others were in danger. A while after Kiriha had received a report that Tayuma had escaped from his prison, Karama, who was following the Sun Rangers, caught something on his spiritual energy sensor. Kiriha believed that there was a high chance that the reaction was from Tayuma, considering the timing, and she began chasing after the Sun Rangers.

The Sun Rangers didn't know that there was a conservative faction of the underground people, nor did they know that the radical faction had a connection with magical power. Connection or not, they didn't even know of magical powers to begin with. Leaving the normal radicals aside, with a core member of the radical faction leading this group of radicals, there was a high chance that they were equipped with magical weapons. On top of that, the timing was bad as the radical faction had gotten more active lately. If left alone, the Sun Rangers would be wiped out by unknown weapons that went by the name of magic.

Seeing the Sun Rangers sacrifice themselves and that the enemy preventing them from escaping, this was quite clearly different from a small skirmish. There was a considerable chance that this might be the trigger to start the battle between the surface dwellers and the underground people. If that happened, it would be the worst case scenario that Kiriha feared. There, Kiriha decided to save the Sun Rangers, well aware that her identity might be exposed.

Part 6

In the conference room of the Sun Rangers' secret base were Koutarou and the others, the Sun Rangers, and the Sun Rangers' commander, professor Roppongi. In total there were 14 of them; that was quite a number, but unlike room 106 this room was quite large, so there was no cramped feeling.

"... I see, so the underground people are currently split up into the conservative faction and the radical faction. I never put much thought into that, but in the end you're human like us. Just like we aren't united, neither were the underground people."

Despite Kiriha explaining the circumstances, professor Roppongi didn't seem very surprised. He stroked his beard while nodding contently.

Looking at the history of Earth, he found no reason to doubt Kiriha's words. While the question of whether Kiriha really belonged to the conservative faction or not remained. The fact that the conservative faction itself existed was a natural thing to Roppongi.

“There are two problems. The first is that the radical faction are not representing the intentions of the People of the Earth. The other is that the radical faction are rushing to get results.”

“So the minority that is the radical faction is trying to force a war with the surface that the majority does not desire is it.”

“So they'd die for their pride... as expected of radicals.”

The radical faction's ideas made them appear as a terrorist organization on the surface. In the end, humanity's enemy was itself. Whether they were from the surface or from underground, the situation never changed.

“Us conservative have chosen to move to the surface without the surface dwellers finding out and eventually merging together with the local people and disappearing. The radical faction can't accept that.”

“So if they face ruin either way, they'd rather be ruined through battle, huh?”

The conservatives had decided to migrate to the surface. They hated conflicts between the surface and underground; as a result, once

those that had migrated to the surface obtained a means to live on their own, the People of the Earth's government would be abandoned. While an organization for social aid might remain, there would no longer be any large-scale activities. In other words, while the People of the Earth's lineage would remain, the nation itself would be ruined. This was something the radicals wouldn't forgive under any circumstances.

What the conservative faction was trying to protect was their lineage, or their people. But the radical faction wanted to protect their nation, their pride and traditions. Since what they valued the most was different, no amount of discussion could resolve their differences.

"I understand the circumstances. It seems like it would be for the best if you and we work together. Though sadly it would be unofficial..."

"I understand your circumstances as well. I appreciate your offer for cooperation."

"I see. Then I will speak with the higher-ups."

The Japanese government probably wouldn't accept the conservative faction's methods. Systematic immigration from a nation they had no diplomatic relationship with was the same as illegal immigration. The government's standpoint on that was clear, and they wouldn't allow it.

But realistically speaking, they would want to cooperate with the conservative faction to combat the radicals. So their cooperation would become unofficial and on a smale scale. In exchange, the People of the Earth would be 'forgotten' once the problems were resolved. If they carelessly aggravated the conservative faction, they

might create another radical faction. Looking at it from another viewpoint, the People of the Earth were in Japan, so they could be considered inhabitants the government previously had no knowledge of. In that sense, there were less problems leaving the conservative faction alone than there were in aggravating them.

The People of the Earth's technology far surpassed Japan's, and their existence was sort of a grey zone. It would be more convenient for the Japanese government to leave the People of the Earth alone and let them vanish.

Like that, the future policy was that they would work together, but that shook some people. Mainly the five Sun Rangers.

"... Things have taken a strange turn."

"Are you not satisfied, Hayato?"

"That's not it... but I'm confused."

"I understand how you feel, Hayato-niichan. We considered all underground people to be evil just a while ago, and now that has suddenly changed. Of course that's strange."

Hayato and Kotarou were confused. Just a while ago, they had fought against the underground people under the belief that they were all evil. Yet now that viewpoint had suddenly collapsed, bringing about a new sense of values. The underground people were split into two factions. They would work together with the conservative faction, while fighting against the radical faction. The two were still unable to adapt to that change in values.

"Kenichi, are you fine?"

“I'm... relieved actually.”

The Sun Rangers' leader, Kenichi, had a different viewpoint from the two. While he was a little confused, he was pleased by the current situation.

“Why?”

“Say we defeat the evil underground people and reach their empire... what then? Do we kill their children? Their women? Their elderly?”

“That's...”

“By working together with the underground people's conservative faction, I'm finally able to see our goal. We only have to fight against the invaders, we don't have to do anything else.”

Before, Kenichi had not seen an end to their battle.

Up until now, the Sun Rangers had only been dealing with the symptoms of the underground people's invasion rather than the actual cause. They had been unable to find the underground people's stronghold and had no choice but to obstruct their invasion. Kenichi couldn't see a bright future as he considered how things were going.

However, even if they had found the underground people's stronghold, what then? Would they kill everyone that lived there? There should be civilians and children amongst the underground people as well. Would they have to kill them all? Or would they capture everyone and keep them somewhere isolated, like at a concentration camp not unlike those from the war? As he imagined

futures like that, Kenichi was reluctant to reach an end of their battle with the underground people.

If their battle continued the way it did now, a sad future was all that waited for them. However, if they worked together with the conservative faction and defeated the radical faction, the battle would end. They would be able to avoid the sad futures. That's why Kenichi welcomed the cooperation with the conservative faction. He wanted to believe in the future where as many people as possible survived.

“Kenichi-niichan, did you eat something strange?”

“You don't have to put it like that! I can be serious at times as well!!”

“That's not what I meant. It's just that what you're saying is correct, so we're just surprised. Right, Hayato-niichan?”

“... Yeah. Kenichi, you're correct. We never even thought about that.”

When they heard what Kenichi had to say, both Hayato's and Kotarou's confusion disappeared. They had never thought of things from Kenichi's perspective. And when they did, they found that he was right.

If the battle ended at an early stage, they wouldn't have to see their teammates hurt, and they wouldn't hold a grudge against the underground people. It was indeed the ideal conclusion.

“Kenichi, you really are the Sun Rangers' leader.”

“Oh, you finally admitted it, Hayato-niichan.”

“I just realized that a leader shouldn't be chosen purely based on ability.”

“You sore loser. But I think so too.”

“Hayato... Kotarou...”

Kenichi teared up a little. His teammates thought the same way he did. Kenichi renewed his determination to see this fight through to the end with his teammates.

“Silly Hayato and Kotarou♪. It was clear that we should be friendly with the underground people the moment my Baron-sama had an underground person as his ally♪. You're all overthinking it♪”

“I'm sure the underground people have delicious food too so I'm glad if we don't have to fight them.”

“You get it Daisaku-kun♪. Ufufufu, I wonder what kind of wonderful underground people there are, aaahhh~, I can't wait♪”

The remaining two, Daisaku and Megumi weren't shaken whatsoever. They believed in cooperation with the underground people before professor Roppongi even made his decision. Their attitude didn't change in the slightest after his decision.

“You're the same as always, Megumi, Daisaku...”

“... I'm envious of that simplicity.”

“Shhh, Neechan will hear you, Hayato-niichan.”

The Sun Rangers had been slightly shook up by the decision that they would cooperate with the underground people's conservative faction. However in the end, their resolve was strengthened.

Part 7

The Sun Rangers was a secret organization created by the government. Since they were made by the government, there had to be a reason for it.

The truth was that there was once another faction apart from the underground people's conservative and radical factions. It was a faction that strived after harmony with the surface even more than the conservative faction. They were people that were actively proclaiming that the People of the Earth should be dismantled.

This third faction, the dismantlement faction, was simple. Once the twentieth century arrived, the surface dwellers' development was clear. The dismantlement faction was very attracted by the surface's lifestyle and culture and began requesting that the People of the Earth be dismantled so they could live on the surface.

However, both the conservative and the radical faction objected. The radicals denounced them as dismantlement was the same as abandoning their pride. The conservative faction thought that dismantling was rushing ahead of it and distanced themselves from the dismantlement faction. As a result, the faction was isolated amongst the People of the Earth.

Isolated, the conservative faction decided that they should migrate to the surface alone. Just then, World War II broke out, and a small amount of the dismantlement faction took advantage of the confusion and migrated. As the migration took place, the

dismantlement faction threw away their identity as People of the Earth and began living as surface dwellers.

This early migration from the dismantlement faction could be said to have changed the fate of the People of the Earth. Those living on the surface would sometimes bring culture from the surface down underground, and they would speak of their experience on the surface. As a result, the people who admired the surface grew, and the population gradually started to leave. As the outflow of people increased, the conservative faction accepted that the People of the Earth were in decline. The leader, Kurano Daiha took this opportunity to change their policy on migration.

However, this was far from welcome to the radical faction, and they began considering the dismantlement faction as enemies, as traitors. Of course, the dismantlement faction sensed that and realized that the radical faction might eventually attack the surface. If that happened, the dismantlement faction who loved the surface's culture and lifestyle would be troubled in two ways. They couldn't stand to see the surface destroyed, but they would also be caught between the surface and the underground in the conflict. There, they decided to make the first move and created an insurance of sorts.

Their insurance was secretly contacting the surface government and giving them technology that had been taken from underground. By doing that, they would let the government know that there were some with advanced technology in a roundabout way. In the case that the surface and underground came into conflict, it would also be convenient for them to have that technology.

As a result, the surface government began their research on underground technology. The Sun Rangers was formed based on

their results. In other words, all of the equipment the Sun Rangers were using were products from their research on underground people's technology, their combat suits and sensors included. That's why their technology was so inferior to Kiriha's. The technology that the dismantlement faction had brought to the surface was technology used around the time of World War II.

From there, time passed and the radical faction began their invasion on the surface. The dormant Sun Rangers organization was brought online and faced the brunt of the invasion. Those were the circumstances around the Sun Rangers.

“These are roughly the reasons for why we're fighting.”

“So they're copies of old technology. No wonder we couldn't win...”

“We've been training so hard so we can win, Megu-chan.”

“... Professor, does that mean that we've been allies with the peaceful underground people from the very beginning?”

“If you call the enemy of your enemy your ally, then that would be the case, yes. There was no clear cooperation between us. It's more of a give-and-take kind of relationship.”

“You should have just said so from the start.”

“Hayato, would we have believed that a year ago?”

“That's...”

“It's just as Kenichi-kun says. The underground invaders’ existence only became apparent as of late. Who would believe it even if their technology was laid down in front of us?”

With Roppongi's words, Kenichi and the others thought back to themselves a year back. When they did, they found that Roppongi's words were quite correct.

“However, with this we can get a grasp of the overall flow. Kiriha-san and the others were more of a middle ground.”

As Kenichi and the others fell silent, Koutarou began talking. Having listened in on what was said, Koutarou had gotten grasp of the overall problems surrounding the underground world.

“Yes. Us conservatives are like our name suggests; gathered around the premise of peace. That said, we didn't first wish to go as far as dismantling the People of the Earth. The reason why we've chosen that now is because the situation has changed.”

Kiriha had a satisfied expression. She had been curious regarding the inferior spiritual energy technology that the Sun Rangers were using, but that problem had been solved by Roppongi's explanation.

“All that's left is how we suppress the radical faction.”

Harumi wrapped up the discussion so far. When considering the conveniences of the surface and underground, the radical faction becomes an obstacle.

The surface wanted to avoid a full-scale war with the advanced People of the Earth. Even if they won, there would be considerable losses. Again, the People of the Earth had fewer numbers, so they too wanted to avoid war with the surface. Short-term aside, looking at it long-term, victory was unimaginable.

Neither side desired war, but the radical faction was trying to start one. They had to be stopped no matter what.

“Uhm, Satomi-san, can I say something?”

That was when Yurika, who had stayed mostly quiet raised her hand and asked to be allowed to speak.

Yurika?

That was when Koutarou had a bad feeling. Yurika's expression was that of a magical girl that fought for justice, something Koutarou didn't want Yurika to show right now.

“... Say it.”

Koutarou held back his anxiety and urged her to continue.

“Yes. Uhm, uhm, about this gun...”

Upon receiving Koutarou's permission, Yurika put one of the rifles on the table.

The rifle weighed several kilos. The heavy sound as the rifle was placed on the table instilled anxiety in a lot of people.

“The truth is, there is a magical reaction coming from this gun.”

“What?!”

That was the reason for Yurika's expression.

Part 8

When Koutarou and the others were saving the Sun Rangers, Yurika felt the presence of magic scattered across the battlefield. The majority of it was from the weapons the underground people

were using. There, Yurika picked up a weapon from those defeated and brought it back. That was the rifle she had put on the desk.

“This rifle itself doesn't have magic cast on it, instead it's the bullets that have a spell cast on them. It looks like the bullets adjust their trajectory based on what their user is targeting.”

Yurika had been examining the rifle up until now. As a result, she realized that the situation was worse than she thought and interrupted the discussion.

“I don't understand magic, but this lady is correct. The bullets fired from their guns changes direction while flying.”

Hayato backed up Yurika's claims. Since Hayato preferred using guns, he had realized the abnormality of the guns the underground people were using at the factory.

“Just where is the radical faction getting enchanted bullets from?”

“They are probably gaining them through Maya-sama. Maya-sama's body was made from spiritual energy technology, so they are probably sharing technology.”

Maya, the previous Dark Navy and also Maki's master. In a previous battle, Maya had suffered serious injuries and lost her ability to fight. However, she had gained a mechanical body and returned to the battlefield. The new body was made using spiritual energy technology. And if she was using that, then it wasn't unlikely that the radical faction would have access to magic. This gun was proof to back up that suspicion.

“Magical weapons are being used to invade the surface. This is clearly a misuse of magic... this is my job.”

Even if it wasn't Darkness Rainbow, the misuse of magic had to be stopped. That was the duty of the magical girl, Rainbow Yurika. Her expression was more serious than ever because this wasn't just for the sake of a friend, but also because this was her original duty.

"... If we're making a move, we should do so soon. Looking at this gun, the radical faction has made careful preparations."

Clan had a severe expression. Both Clan and Yurika had investigated the gun, but her scientific knowledge had made the radical faction's intentions clear.

"What do you mean?"

"This gun has a very high processing precision. I've only investigated it with the measuring instruments at hand, but it has been made using technology that far exceeds the technology of the surface."

"Well of course, it's made by the underground people."

The underground people had advanced technology. On top of that, the production machinery probably had spells cast on them to increase their precision. It wasn't strange for their precision to be so high.

"That's not the problem. While the precision of the parts that affects the shooting of the rifle are very high, the precision of the parts consumed during use isn't that high."

"What do you mean?"

Koutarou tilted his head in confusion. There, Hayato who was knowledgeable in guns explained.

“In other words, the rifle is designed so that the consumable parts can be reproduced on the surface. That's bad, this is indeed troublesome. They're making weapons taking into consideration what happens after they've attacked the surface.”

“I believe it's the same reason for why the guns themselves don't use magic. They're working under the assumption that the supply of magic won't make it in time as the battlefield expands.”

When making weapons used during short term and long term, the design needed was almost completely different.

For weapons used in short term, they could simply be made using high quality parts.

The weapons used during raids by a small number of elite forces were most likely these kind of weapons.

However, in a long war, that would lead to problems. If the soldiers used high quality weapons that they themselves couldn't maintain, the weapons would be unusable after a few days. The same goes for specific parts imbued with magic. If the supply of parts couldn't keep up as the battlefield expanded, the weapons would once again become unusable.

That's why for long wars, weapons needed to be designed for easy maintenance. They also wouldn't need special parts, but could be reproduced in the occupied territories. The guns were then made to fire standard bullets, while keeping the enchanted bullets in reserve for when they were needed.

Weapons couldn't just be made using high quality parts. They needed to be designed with their purpose in mind. And these guns were made with the invasion of the surface in mind. That was the

reason as to why Clan had said that the radical faction had made careful preparations.

“Looking at this gun from an industrial and strategic point of view, it has a correct design. It's hard to believe that this was made by only thinking of the first attack on the surface. The radical faction is without a doubt taking a long war into consideration.”

“Which means that once they begin moving, it'll be hard to stop them. Kiriha-san!”

“I know. Let's take action as soon as we can.”

The radical faction couldn't be underestimated. It was clear that they were more dangerous than imagined. Knowing that, they couldn't be left to their own devices. Koutarou and the others no longer had time to spare.

As a result of examining possible measures, it was decided that the factory should be infiltrated and investigated. The primary reason for that was to investigate what was being produced at the factory and get a grasp of the radical faction’s plans. They knew that weapons were being produced thanks to Daisaku and Megumi's photos, but they wanted more details. And, if possible, they wanted to sabotage the manufacturing.

Once the measure had been decided on, Theia and Ruth who had been at the station joined the group. The situation was currently being explained to them.

“I see, those Sun Rangers did... What a strange turn of events.”

“So what will you do, Master?”

“I will guard Kiriha-san and infiltrate the factory.”

There would be two groups infiltrating the factory. The majority would serve as a diversion while a select few enter. The members of the small group were Koutarou, Kiriha, Clan and Harumi. Kiriha was knowledgeable about the People of the Earth, Clan was knowledgeable in science, and Harumi was careful and could use magic. Koutarou would guard the three.

“What should we do?”

“Please join Yurika and the others and divert the enemy’s attention to the main entrance. The ones in charge of the diversion will have a fierce fight on their hands. We need people that can push them back.”

“Leave it to me. That is my specialty. I will splendidly perform my duties.”

“Master...”

Theia agreed to the plan right away, but Ruth clasped her hands in front of her chest and looked up at Koutarou. The moment he looked into her eyes, he understood what she wanted.

“... Lord Ruthkania Nye Pardomshiha, vice captain of the Satomi band of knights, accompany princess Theiamillis and divert the enemy's attention.”

“I will do so with my life!”

Receiving orders from Koutarou, Ruth's eyes shone and she replied with a Forthorthe-style salute.

Part 9

Theia and Ruth had left for the station both to go shopping and to pick a certain something up. The something was the band of knights uniform that Theia and Ruth had designed.

“Maki-sama, how does it fit?”

“It's perfect.”

“It doesn't get in the way of your movements does it?”

“Don't worry, it's easy to move in. But Ruth-san... could you stop it with that Maki-sama?”

“Why?”

“You are the vice captain, and I'm your subordinate, so...”

“Then... Maki-san.”

“That's better.”

“Ufufufu, you're surprisingly nitpicky.”

“What are you saying when you're the one who prepared these uniforms.”

“Aha, that's true.”

Ruth and Maki were wearing matching uniforms. These uniforms were somewhat resembling of Koutarou's armor, but the design in its entirety was closer to a school uniform. It was a girlish and cute design. The colors were blue and white, based on the Blue Knight and Alaia, and then each person's personal color was added in.

Ruth's color was yellow, and Maki's was indigo. It was a wonderful design filled with Theia's and Ruth's maiden dreams.

"...Why is it just Ruth and Maki?"

Sanae who was watching was dissatisfied. Since she hadn't officially joined the band of knights, she couldn't wear this cute uniform. This displeased her and she had a frown on her face. Then, Harumi called out to Sanae.

"Higashihongan-san, you can wear one once this fight is over."

"Really?!"

"Yes. Once the problem with the underground people is resolved, there won't be any reason to maintain the standstill."

At the moment, Sanae had to maintain her position as an invader to keep the People of the Earth from exploding. However, since the People of the Earth had made their move, once this was resolved, there was no worry about the People of the Earth running amok any more. Once that happened, Sanae could freely join the band of knights and wear the uniform.

"Koutarou, Koutarou! Once this is over will you let me join the band of knights?! I'll be in charge of the chores!!"

"I get it, I get it, so calm down a little."

"Alright! Then I'll do my best!"

"Keep it in moderation."

"Yeah!"

Sanae's mood had completely recovered and she hung onto Koutarou's back like always. She looked like a child, but the spiritual energy in her body was stronger than ever, and the overflowing spiritual energy formed a faint halo. Sanae had plenty of motivation.

"..."

In contrast to Sanae, Yurika was low-spirited. She was holding her cane, Angel Halo, while quietly thinking about something.

"Hey."

A dull thud rang out.

"Ow?!"

Having noticed Yurika's appearance, Koutarou casually bonked her on her forehead.

"W-What are you doing, Satomi-san?!"

Yurika held her forehead and complained to Koutarou. Her serious expression had vanished in an instant.

"I just accidently hit you because you were showing a face so unlike you."

"Why can't you be more gentle? Geez!"

"If I'm gentle now, you'd cry, right."

However, Yurika didn't complain for long. Koutarou's words had drained the strength from her and she looked away, embarrassed.

“Tha.... That... might be true, but...”

“Don't get so eager just because this is related to magic. You're not fighting on your own anymore. we're all with you.”

“Satomi-san...”

Yurika took a deep breath and loosened up her expression.

“I feel a little better. Thank you, Satomi-san.”

“I only hit you.”

“... I'll leave it at that.”

With some tension leaving her body, Yurika flashed a smile. But at the same time, she wiped away some tears that were forming in her eyes. In the end, she cried a little.

“Satomi-kun really gets Yurika-chan.”

Shizuka laughed as she looked at Koutarou and Yurika. Koutarou responded by smiling wryly.

“For better or for worse, she is a handful. If you spend more than a year together, you'll understand, like it or not.”

Koutarou dropped his shoulders as he said that. Both Koutarou himself and the girls around knew that he was just hiding his embarrassment.

“Geez~ Satomi-san, if you love me then you should just say so. You're so shy.”

Another dull thud rang out.

“... S-Sorry. I got too full of myself...”

“By the way, Satomi-kun, don't you have any of that consideration for me?”

“You mean you want me to hit you?”

Koutarou waved his fist around and turned to Shizuka.

“No. Don't you have any words of encouragement or good luck charms for this unfortunate landlord dragged into this fight? There're so many things you could do, like taking me to a movie.”

“Then... how about this?”

Koutarou placed the hand he had been waving around on top of Shizuka's head and gently patted her. Shizuka smiled and showed a satisfied expression.

“Hmm... well, it works.”

“I am glad I could be of help.”

Normally Shizuka would never complain, but Koutarou paid no heed to that and smiled.

Well, anyone would get anxious...

While all of the girls here held strong powers, they were still girls in their teens. When faced with a battle that would decide the future of the underground people, there was no way they could stay calm. The results of this battle would affect room 106's future. Koutarou had gotten enough of a grasp of the female heart to understand that.

“Then could you do it for one more?”

“One more?”

“Koutarou, this way.”

“Owow.”

As Koutarou was confused by Shizuka's words, Sanae forcibly turned his head towards Kiriha who was studying a map with a serious expression.

That’s...

Koutarou could see the card in Kiriha's hand, and he knew what that meant. Like Shizuka said, there was one more he had to do something about.

“She's been emitting a strange aura for a while now, I've tried doing some stuff... but nothing really works. So Koutarou, please.”

“Sanae... Okay, I'll give it a shot.”

“Yeah, please do.”

After hugging Koutarou once, Sanae climbed off his back.

“That said, what should I tell her?”

Koutarou thought for a while. Kiriha was a leader of the People of the Earth, she was in the center of this problem. Some thoughtless attempts at comforting her might have the opposite effect. There, Harumi gave Koutarou some counseling.

“Satomi-kun, you only have to act like you do normally. What you convey to her isn't just some decorated words, right?”

Harumi's words were filled with conviction and her eyes were as gentle as possible.

Your majesty Alaia...

Her appearance reminded him of a girl he had met in the past. He knew they were different people, but as of late, they would seemingly overlap from time to time. Harumi had begun emanating a dignified aura like that girl’s.

“Right now, Kurano-san is your princess. So please go to her side at once, sir knight.”

“... Yes.”

Harumi called Kiriha a princess, but to Koutarou, the calmly smiling Harumi looked like a real princess.

Part 10

As Koutarou headed towards Kiriha, the remaining girls naturally followed him with their eyes. They watched over, full of curiosity, wondering how Koutarou would deal with her.

“He's talking to her.”

“Well. That's the appropriate way to start.”

Having approached Kiriha, Koutarou started by chatting with her. Since Kiriha would glance down at her hand from time to time, they were probably talking about her card.

“I wonder what the card is.”

“R-Ruth-san, it seems to be a character card from an old anime. But it seems to mean a lot to her, so you normally wouldn't ask too much, right? That's why we don't know much either.”

“I see. So Shizuka-sama, what charac—”

“Pardomshiha, have a look at Bertorion!”

“Eh?”

As the girls discussion was about to enter a dangerous topic, Koutarou took his next step. They were still talking, but Koutarou had placed his hand on Kiriha's head and he gently began patting her.

“I love that.”

Looking at Koutarou patting Kiriha's head, Maki blushed a little and her eyes moistened. When she thought back to when Koutarou had done the same to her, she understood how Kiriha felt.

“Kiriha-san is crying.”

“Kiriha can't rely on a person whenever she likes to like you.”

“I see, in Kiriha's case it's just Koutarou.”

“She'd be fine if she could take a defiant attitude like her highness.”

“Ruth, are you picking a fight with me?”

“Of course not.”

As Kiriha was having her head patted, tears streamed down from Kiriha's eyes. They were proof that she was a normal girl. It was her true appearance that she only showed Koutarou. Koutarou reached out towards Kiriha's cheek and wiped her tears away.

“Koutarou's hands are really warm you know. That's why I'm always rubbing my face against them.”

“I've experienced it too... It was the first time since my dad did it, so I cried.”

“Satomi-kun has a part of him that craves the warmth of others... so when he's doing that, he might feel the same way we do.”

“Sakuraba-senpai, you make it sound like you're Satomi-san's girlfriend.”

“That wasn't my intention... I-I just meant it as a general rule!”

All of the girls watching over Koutarou and Kiriha had some form of remembrance of the scene playing out in front of them. That's why they could understand Kiriha's feelings, and were able to objectively see their own. And all of them reaffirmed that they need Koutarou, and the ones around them as well. That's why they felt it was only natural for the deeply moved Kiriha to be hugging Koutarou.

“Of course she'd hug him... I think about it every day.”

“I think about it from time to time. That maybe Koutarou was sent by the Goddess of Dawn to save us.”

“Your highness, if you're going to say that, it's not just Master.”

“You're right. We are all saving another in one way or another.”

Eventually Koutarou hugged Kiriha back. As he did, Kiriha clung on to him and began crying even harder.

“It was because he hugged me like that, that I was able to leave Darkness Rainbow. If it's him, we could support each other...”

“In my case, I annulled an engagement, but... I don't regret it.”

“Your fiance was an enemy, wasn't he?”

“When Satomi-kun protects you, you get this feeling of wanting to protect him too. But I think that's what happiness is. A one-sided relationship is lonely, isn't it?”

Many had experienced the embrace of Koutarou's powerful arms. Many had felt the sensation that Kiriha was feeling now. That's why the other girls teared up as well. This wasn't someone else's business to them.

“... I can't accept it.”

Amongst them was one girl who was unhappy. It was Clan, who had a frown and a look of dissatisfaction in her eyes behind her glasses.

“I've never had him to do that to me, not even once.”

“Ah, me too. I've only done it during the play...”

“In Harumi's case, it was practically real, right? It doesn't count as not having experienced it!”

Clan was the only one who hadn't been hugged by Koutarou. Strictly speaking, Harumi hadn't experienced it either; the only thing she had was being able to be close to Koutarou during their club activities. However, since Harumi had Alaia's memories intertwining with her memories of the play, it was practically inseparable from reality.

“But, but, Clan-san, Satomi-san is always saying how much he loves you.”

“He only says that when he's working me hard!”

“He's never said that to me when he works me hard...”

However, Clan's anger didn't last for long. It was as Yurika said. While she had never been hugged, Clan had memories on she shared with Koutarou. It was too rash to judge their relation based on whether she had been hugged or not.

“Ah, Kiriha is smiling.”

“How good. She looks like she'll be fine.”

Having been hugged by Koutarou for a while, Kiriha eventually separated herself from him and smiled. She had probably been able to get her feelings in order through her talk with Koutarou, the girls watching were rejoiced as if it was they themselves.

That was when Harumi sighed and mumbled under her breath.

“What can we do... to keep Satomi-kun the same always...”

Koutarou needed Harumi and the others. That's why he had returned from the past. And if possible, Harumi wanted that to continue forever. She didn't want him going somewhere far out of her reach ever again. That wasn't something only Harumi wanted, but all of the girls did too.

Infiltration Operation

Part 1

Saturday, July 3

While the Sun Rangers had been able to sneak into the underground people's factory, they were now obviously a lot more alert. The soldiers would patrol more often, and they were clearly armed. They didn't want to allow any more intruders.

“I'm really glad we hurried.”

Kiriha observed the factory on the other end of the forest through her digital binoculars and let out a small sigh of relief. Confused by Kiriha's reaction, Koutarou who was watching the factory next to her asked her for her reason.

“Why? Isn't it more problematic if there are more guards?”

“While it is problematic, it means there is still something left to be guarded.”

“I see, so it would actually be worse for us if it wasn't as guarded.”

“Precisely.”

The fact that the guards had increased around the factory meant that the radical faction still needed it. Since Koutarou and the others wanted to find out what they were doing, the fact that the guards had increased meant that the evidence they wanted was still inside the factory. A decreased guard meant that the factory was no longer producing anything, and it would be too late even if Koutarou and

the others infiltrated it. While more enemies was troublesome, it wasn't all bad news.

“There's also one more reason I'm glad we hurried.”

“And that is?”

“The fact that the guard is so obviously armed means that it won't be long until the factory won't be needed anymore.”

“You mean that they no longer need to worry about being seen?”

The factory guards were quite obviously more armed than a general corporations guard. The factory guards weren't even trying to hide their weapons as they patrolled the factory site. In Japan there were practically no factory were the guards were armed with guns. That's why if they were spotted by someone, they would easily be able to tell that something is wrong. At this rate it was only a matter of time before they were reported for engaging in terrorism.

But what if they wouldn't be for long?

Before the police or mass media could reach the factory, it would have outlived its purpose. Or, they might already have begun their attack on the surface. If that was the situation, it didn't matter if the general population spotted them. The primary risk was having the enemy infiltrate them once more.

“Satomi-san, don't go too far ahead. You'll step out of the area of the camouflage spell.”

“Ah, sorry, Yurika.”

Koutarou and the others were approaching the factory while being protected by Yurika and Maki's spells. While there was still some distance, magic was perfect for closing in as the radical faction still hadn't noticed them. However, they should have access to magic as well, so they couldn't be careless.

“Baron-san, it's about time we split up.”

“You're right. Red Shine, take care of my friends.”

“Of course.”

From here, they would split into the diversion team and the infiltration team as planned.

Kiriha was the leader for the infiltration team, and it would consist of her, Koutarou, Clan, and Harumi. The diversion team consisted of the remaining people with its leader being Red Shine, Kenichi. The diversion team would distract the enemy, to allow for the infiltration team to sneak into the factory and gather information, and if possible, sabotage the factory.

“Then we're going.”

“See you later everyone.”

“Theiamillis-san, don't mess up.”

“You're the ones more likely to be in danger. Be careful.”

After saying their farewells, the infiltration team disappeared into the woods. The remaining diversion team remained on the spot until they could no longer see the others.

“... By the way everyone, can I ask you something?”

Once Koutarou and the others couldn't be seen, Kenichi asked the remaining girls of room 106. It was something he hadn't asked, but wanted to.

“I don't mind. What is it?”

Theia represented the group and answered. As she did, Kenichi asked hesitantly.

“I've been wondering, but what relationship do you all have? Your group is so rich in variety that I can't even imagine.”

Kiriha was from the underground and the remaining members were helping her, that much he knew. However, he had no idea as to why they began working together.

A leader of the underground people, Kiriha. Theia, Ruth, and Clan who had extremely advanced technology. Yurika, Maki, and Harumi who could use magic. Sanae who had spiritual powers. Shizuka who was overwhelmingly strong with martial arts. And finally Koutarou who brought them together.

Kenichi couldn't fathom why such a varied group had gathered in one place.

“We...”

Theia was about to instinctively answer that they were invaders, but she stopped to think before she said it. She had doubts whether that word was apt to describe them now. That's why after thinking for a moment, she gave a different answer.

"... We are sort of like a family. Like you said, because we are rich in variety, we were often in conflict at first. However, those conflicts are now what supports us. We hold each other's hands, knowing each other's good and bad sides."

"That's quite a deep relationship."

Theia's answer was slightly different from what Kenichi wanted to hear, but he was able to guess the circumstances from it. They had gathered together, by fate or by chance, and after repeated conflicts, they eventually took each other's hands. That was how Kenichi understood Theia's story.

"That's why you will be fine too. I'm sure you'll be able to coexist with the underground people."

"I hope so."

If Theia and the others could, then surely they could too.

Holding on to that hope, Kenichi headed for his battleground.

Part 2

Having separated from the others, Koutarou and the others in the infiltration team were hurrying through the forest. Since the diversion team would attack the front gate, the infiltration would attempt to sneak in from the back. The distance from the infiltration point to the factory building was the shortest from that position, bringing with it the lowest risk of being spotted by the enemy. When Koutarou and the others got into position, the diversion team would begin their attack, so they wanted to get there as quickly as possible.

“Clan. You're falling behind. Hurry up.”

“E-Even if you, say that, running is, not my specialty!”

Amongst them, Clan was falling behind. Koutarou was wearing armor, Harumi was using the PAF, and Kiriha was well-trained. However, Clan who had below average stamina was already out of breath.

“Guess it can't be helped.”

“Kyaa?!”

There, Koutarou caught Clan and lifted her up in his arms before continuing to run. With Koutarou's powered armor, running while carrying Clan was no problems.

“Bertorion, I can—”

—fly on my own, is what Clan was about to say when she remembered what she and the girls had talked about before. As a result, she swallowed her next words.

“What is it?”

“I-I just stopped being stubborn. I'm counting on you for a while.”

Clan could fly through the sky through her own inventions, but she had chosen not to do so. Instead, she swung her arms around Koutarou's neck and embraced him.

It’s a bit different from being hugged... but this is nice in its own way...

This wasn't a situation where a girl of age should be glad, but she instinctively poured strength into her arms. Her appearance was awfully cute and Harumi who was next to them instinctively smiled.

“Fufu, not being stubborn is the best, Clan-san.”

“W-Well, it's better for my own pride to be hurt than for me to slow down everyone else.”

“It'd be dangerous if you fell, so don't force yourself too much and hold on tight.”

“... I think... I'll do just that...”

Clan blushed as she drew her cheek closer to Koutarou. From that proximity, she could feel Koutarou's warmth and breath, and with that, Clan's mind turned blank.

However, Koutarou himself couldn't tell how Clan was doing because she was too close. What he was more interested right now was Harumi.

“Sakuraba-senpai, don't force yourself either.”

“I'm fine, Satomi-kun. That's why I'm on this side.”

Since they would infiltrate after the enemy was distracted, it should be a lot safer being on the infiltration team than the diversion team. That said, Koutarou followed them as a guard, just in case.

“And besides, Clan-san's invention is covering for my body's handicap.”

“Then that's fine...”

Koutarou reluctantly nodded. Harumi's words were logical, but Koutarou had a strong objection against dragging her onto a battlefield.

Even though she was in a safer position, having her handicap alleviated through PAF, and held a strong power she had inherited from Alaia, to Koutarou, Harumi was still herself. Like Yurika, he didn't want to see her on a battlefield.

“But even then, I'm reluctant to have you fight, Sakuraba-senpai.”

“If you're going to say that, I don't want you fighting either, Satomi-kun. You're not someone who should normally be on a battlefield.”

Harumi understood how Koutarou felt. To her, Koutarou wasn't someone who should fight. Koutarou, who had lost a family member and was looking for warmth, shouldn't be a weapon that hurt others. There was only one reason as to why he fought.

“But even then, you fight. For everyone, and their future. That's why I am the same. I want to stay by your side and do the same.”

“Sakuraba-senpai...”

“Of course, I know I'm not suited for fighting. That's why I want to help as best as I can without getting in the way.”

Harumi's feelings hadn't changed since the day she learned of Koutarou and the others’ secret. She wanted to walk down the same path they did. That was it. And she was sure that the other girl inside of her felt the same way.

“Give it up, Satomi Koutarou. Harumi is correct.”

“... Okay, okay. In that case, let's get this over with quick. That’d be for the best.”

Koutarou gave up as Kiriha called out to him.

If Harumi didn't have a reason to fight, the same could be said for Koutarou. There was no reason that allowed Koutarou to fight but not Harumi. In that case, their best bet was to complete their mission as quickly as possible in order to avoid any fighting.

And it’s not just senpai or Yurika. It’s the same for Kiriha-san, Clan, and everyone else too. They’re all strong, but they’re definitely better off not having to fight...

Koutarou wanted all of the girls of room 106 to live happily. It wasn't just Harumi he wanted to keep out of the fighting. Koutarou was determined to do his best for the girls.

Part 3

The report that the infiltration team had reached their position came in ten minutes after the groups had split up. At that time, the girls of room 106 and the Sun Rangers had reached the front gate of the factory.

“A laser message from Master. They have reached their assigned position.”

“Send him a message telling him not to mess up... Well then, let's go!”

Theia stood at the front with her arms on her hips. That was when the night wind blew at her golden hair. It was like a waving flag. Her apparent confidence and the unwavering will in her eyes was so great and beautiful it made one forget about her small size.

“Maki-san, this will be the first battle for our band of knights. Perform your best to not sully the Satomi family name.”

“As you wish, vice captain! I will protect her highness in place of our captain!”

Ruth and Maki wore their band of knight uniforms and stood next to Theia in order to protect her. However they were wearing their own arms on top of their uniforms. Ruth was wearing armor and was equipped with two beam swords. Maki wore an indigo robe and held her magical cane. While their birthplace and looks were different, the two held the same emotions in their eyes.

Behind those three were Sanae and Shizuka.

“Alright, I'll give it my all today!”

“You sure are getting into it Sanae-chan.”

“I'll take all the spotlight and make Koutarou invite me to the band of knights!”

“Maybe I'll do the same.”

“That's more like it Shizuka! Have the monster uncle work too!”

“No thank you!”

“Don’t be so cold, Shizuka.”

“But if I bring out uncle Alu my weight will increase! I'll finish this today without having to bring him out!”

“... It’s not like your weight actually increases...”

“I don't really get it, but you can do it Shizuka!”

Neither Sanae nor Shizuka had any armor or weapons, but instead they were enveloped in spiritual energy. Sanae was clad in her own spiritual energy, while Shizuka wore the spiritual energy of the dragon inside of her. Thanks to that, the two were stronger than the armed soldiers. To these two, weapons or armor only got in the way.

“... Nana-san... I'll do my best today...”

Behind them was Yurika. The atmosphere around her was different from normal. There was a clear distinction between today's enemy compared to what she had gone up against until now. They were an organized enemy that misused magic, a clear enemy of Rainbow Heart. At the same time, the battle with this enemy would have a major effect on Kiriha's future. This was both her duty and for the sake of her friend. That's why she had a more serious expression than normal.

“I'm still nowhere near as good as Nana-san is, but I will definitely pull through!”

Yurika tightly gripped her cane, Angel Halo.

It was her expression as a magical girl that she had shown from time to time. That expression was now clearly showing on the surface. The current Yurika was now magical girl, Rainbow Yurika

in the truest sense. She was like a completely different person when compared to when she had first come to room 106.

“Baron-san's friends are all amazing people... We still have a long way to go...”

“We've become able to tell that just by looking, so we've made progress too.”

“Kotarou is right, Kenichi. Nothing good will come from tormenting yourself.”

“Yeah. Just being able to tell how amazing Baron-sama is, that’s already a huge step forward!”

“... Sadly, that part of Megu-chan hasn't made any progress.”

In the back were the five Sun Rangers. They were wearing their usual combat uniforms. However during these months, the combat uniforms had all kinds of scratches and damages. They were proof of their growth, proof that they were first-rate soldiers. They were no longer a disorderly mob like they had been when they first met Koutarou. Like Yurika, it was like they were completely different people.

There were six girls from room 106 and five Sun Rangers. In total there were eleven of them. They were boldly approaching the factory from the front. As they did, the spotlights around the factory focused on them. When they had approached to within ten meters of the gate, a speaker attached to the gate gave of a warning in a strong tone.

“This is a privately owned area! If you approach any further we will remove you by force!”

It was a conventional warning. However it was clear that it was just a formality. The soldiers who served as guards had already aimed their weapons and were waiting for the order to fire. They were well aware that the people in front of them were those that had appeared during daytime.

“Do it if you can! I'll show you who you're barking at!”

Theia fearlessly stood at the front as the enemy warned, or more precisely threatened her. The unyielding strength she had been born with revealed itself in her eyes.

“Blue Knight, raise the flag!”

“As you wish, my princess.”

On Theia's orders, a large flag several meters wide spread out behind the group. This wasn't a physical flag, but one drawn using lasers. In the center of the flag was a golden flower. It was the flag raised when Theia herself went to the front.

Part 4

The flag drawn from lasers stood out even from afar. It could even be seen by Koutarou and the others on the opposite end of the factory.

“So it's started.”

Once the flag was raised and a golden light was emitted, the factory guards’ attention was naturally drawn towards it. As a result, the guards began swarming in that direction. As planned, the guard around the rear of the factory was relaxed.

“Clan.”

While Theia's flag was meant to draw the enemy's attention, it was also a signal for Koutarou's group to begin moving. As the diversion team’s battle begun, Koutarou and the others began their infiltration of the factory.

“The preparations are already done. The surveillance cameras on our route are already being fed dummy footage and the sensors’ positions have been confirmed. I will guide us into the factory undetected.”

The infiltration would begin under Clan's guidance. As her ship was specialized in stealth functions, she had excellent techniques for concealing oneself. While the People of the Earth had more advanced detection methods than those found on the surface, they were but rudimentary sensors to Clan.

“Kii, you will have to do something about the spiritual energy sensors.”

“Karama, Korama, activate the spiritual energy sensors and detect the location of their sensors.”

“Got it, Nee-san!”

“Karama-chan, let's show them our gallant figure Ho!”

“Don't fall for us Ho!”

“I won't fall for you!”

The only thing Clan couldn't do anything about was the devices made using spiritual energy technology. Since it was something

based on a completely different technology, there was nothing she could do about these. Kiriha and her haniwas would need to deal with them.

“Senpai, could you keep an eye out for spells just in case?”

“I understand, I'll be careful.”

Since magicians needed to cast spells manually, one at a time, the chances that they were being used at a large site like a factory was low. However, there was still a chance that they might be used in a smaller area. It was important to have Harumi stay alert.

During their infiltration, Clan was in charge of science, Kiriha of spiritual energy and Harumi of magic. Koutarou would guard the three. The infiltration team inevitably became these four when taking into account everyone's abilities and their personalities.

“Alright, let's go everyone.”

“”Yes!””

The three girls responded to Koutarou in harmony. The four passed through the fence and infiltrated the factory site. Neither their voices nor teamwork showed any disorder.

Part 5

They would have liked to advance straight towards the factory, but there were too many sensors in the way. Koutarou and the others followed Clan's directions, slowly but surely closing in on the building.

“Next stay low and approach that corner. Bertorion, you need to stay extra careful because you're so tall.”

“Got it, I'll be careful.”

They would sneak from shadow to shadow, sometimes they would stay low and crawl, slowly approaching the factory building. While they wanted to approach as quickly as possible, they would be found by the enemy if they did. In order for them to get as much information as possible, they needed to remain patient for now.

Koutarou and the others slowly infiltrated for several minutes. Fortunately their efforts paid off and they reached the factory building without being detected.

“Geez, we finally reached it.”

“Well done, Clan. You really are good at these kind of cowardly things.”

“Are you praising me or taking a stab at me?”

“I'm praising you, really.”

“I can't believe it, geez.”

“It's okay, Clan-san. Satomi-kun is always singing praise of you when you aren't around.”

“Ah, hey, Sakuraba-senpai?!”

“Fufufu, sorry.”

“I-Is that true?!”

Koutarou and the others hid by the building and rested for a moment. Being freed from the tension that had been building up for a while, Koutarou and the others showed a smile of relief. The words they exchanged were carried with light tones. However, they could only remain like that for a short while.

A group of soldiers passed right by the place where Koutarou and the others were hiding. They were reinforcements for the battle going on at the front gate. Waiting until the soldiers were far enough away, Kiriha opened her mouth.

“We can't take this too easily. Koutarou, let's enter the building as soon as possible.”

“You're right. I'm sure the other group is having problems.”

The sounds of gunfire and explosions reached even Koutarou's group. It was clear that the diversion team was in the middle of a fierce battle and there was no time for Koutarou and the others to take it easy.

“Nee-san, we should stop before the service entrance over there Ho!”

“An active spiritual energy sensor has been set up in that area Ho! We'll be detected even using class II stealth mode Ho!”

However, the factory's security was tight. It would be difficult to use the entrance the soldiers used.

“I want to hurry, but we should probably refrain from forcibly breaking through with these numbers.”

“We should look for another entrance. Clan, can you find one?”

“Please wait a moment... uhm...”

Clan operated her bracelet and sent orders to her small unmanned scout. This scout had been gathering information for a while and had already made a rough sketch of the outside of the factory. Clan called up that information and analyzed it again, selecting a different infiltration route.

“... Let's see. Just a bit away from here is an exhaust vent where the heat from the factory is being exhausted. I tried following the heat signature and it seems to reach quite a way into the factory.”

Clan suggested that they infiltrate the factory from the exhaust port, but Kiriha quickly shook her head.

“... Since this is heat exhaust from weapons productions, it must be quite a considerable temperature. Koutarou aside, none of us would probably be able to get through.”

When processing metal for weapons production, the heat exhausted is massive. One could imagine it as a scorching hot wind. That was no problem for Koutarou, whose armor was designed for space use, but the other three wouldn't be able to pass through it. That's why Kiriha couldn't imagine it as a realistic path. While Kiriha liked Clan and wanted to respect her opinion to its utmost, this time she had to oppose it.

“I've already thought of that, Kii.”

Since that response was within her expectations, Clan smiled. She had already thought of a countermeasure.

“Considering the data I have, we should be able to pass without any problems using Harumi's magic.”

Clan's data had been accumulated from both Alaia's and Harumi's magic. That data showed that with Harumi's defensive and cooling spells, they should be able to endure the factory's heat exhaust.

“I see, that might work.”

“Of course, it would only last for a short while... There are also other merits to it. In the heat exhaust vent, there should be less detection devices.”

Even if they had a tight security, they most likely wouldn't watch over an area that required a spacesuit to pass through. The guard around the exhaust should be less guarded than the entrance from before.

“We're counting on you, Harumi.”

“Please leave it to me. I came with you for these kinds of situations.”

Harumi didn't flinch from the sudden job thrown onto her; instead she nodded powerfully as her beautiful long hair started shining silver.

Part 6

The infiltration from the exhaust port was progressing smoothly. Harumi was controlling the magical power from Signaltin and protected Koutarou and the others from the scorching hot wind. As a result, the group could casually take a walk through the winds over 100 degrees Celsius. After walking through the exhaust vent for a while, the group found a maintenance hatch that they managed to pry open and infiltrated the factory. As expected, the heat exhaust was poorly guarded, and nobody had detected them.

“Koutarou, your hand.”

Koutarou was the last to pass through the maintenance, and in front of him was a ladder going up. Above him was Kiriha's hand, waiting to pull him up.

“Thanks. But that's no good, Kiriha-san. The armor is still heated up a little.”

“I don't mind.”

“I do.”

Koutarou regrettably smiled wryly and shook his head.

The maintenance hatch was heated by the exhaust, so Koutarou who was wearing an armor was in charge of opening and shutting it, but the heat from the hatch transmitted to Koutarou's armor. While the armor had a cooling function, it still hadn't fully cooled. If Koutarou grabbed her hand, she probably wouldn't get burnt, but her hand would most likely turn red from the heat. That's why Koutarou climbed up the ladder on his own.

“... Onii-chan doesn't understand the feelings of a girl who wants to be of help to the person she loves.”

Kiriha whispered so only Koutarou could hear and pouted. Kiriha, or rather Kii, wanted to be of help to Koutarou. She didn't mind if her hand heated up a little.

“... What can I do, you're important, Kii.”

“... Ahaha, then I guess it can't be helped.”

However, she was only able to remain childlike for a few seconds. They were in the middle of a battle, and tension soon returned to her expression. The same went for Koutarou, and when he opened his mouth again, he had the face of a knight.

“By the way, Kiriha-san, what kind of place is this?”

“This is an area with blast furnaces and pressing machines. An area filled with equipment that emit a large amount of heat. There should be another area where armor is attached to the weapons. I want to take a look at that first.”

Koutarou couldn't even imagine what kind of machinery was around him, but they were for large-scale metalwork. The metal was melted in the blast furnaces and molded into rough shapes. The shapes were processed in the press and cut into parts. To Kiriha, it looked like armor for the weapons being made here.

While armor was being made, since several parts were being produced it would be hard to get a grasp of the overall shape by examining this area. They would be better off heading for the area where the armor was put together. And if possible, she wanted to head to the control room where the production was overseen.

“Clan-san, where should we head?”

Harumi felt like this was an incredibly odd place, even more so than Koutarou. That was only obvious for a girl who wasn't good with technology. Troubled by this, she sought Clan's help.

“Well, if this factory's layout is logical then we should head in the direction of the front gate.”

Clan answered without hesitation. Since she wasn't a normal girl, she had the most accurate grasp of this place. A functionally-arranged factory was a world she was more in line of her kind of world than the city was.

“Why?”

“Because transporting in and out would be easier that way. It's the most logical to place the start and finish of the production line there.”

“I see. Then they'd be able to produce as efficiently as possible.”

A transport would drop off the material and leave after being loaded up with the finished product. In that case, it was natural for production to start and end by the entrance. While there were some exceptions, a well-placed production line had its start and finish at the same place.

“Which means that we only need to head that way.”

“Let's hurry. The battle outside is still ongoing.”

Koutarou and the others headed in the direction Clan had pointed out to examine the factory.

Everyone, stay safe...

Despite having entered the factory, they could still hear the sounds of battle. Koutarou prayed for the girls' safety while pumping himself up to complete his mission as quickly as possible.

Part 7

The diversion operation couldn't simply focus on defeating the enemy. If the battle progressed too one-sidedly then the enemy might retreat under the assumption that they can't win. If that happened, there would have been no point in a diversion. They needed to make the enemy believe that they could win. As a result, Theia and the others couldn't make any major attacks, such as bombarding the area using the Blue Knight. Instead, they were fighting against the soldiers directly.

“Blue Knight! Anti-personnel smart gun!”

“Please select your desired bullet.”

“Use paralysis bullets, fire away at will!”

“As you wish, my princess.”

Theia summoned an anti-personnel weapon from the Blue Knight and fired down on the soldiers.

The weapon Theia was using was a large machine gun that one would often find attached to a vehicle. The gun fired out nearly 1000 bullets per second and the sound was like the rumbling of the earth.

“Kya kya kya?!”

The bullets didn't just assault the enemy, but also Yurika who was near them. Since the Blue Knight was aiming automatically, almost no bullets hit her, but she didn't feel happy about being shot at by her own ally. Yurika was already in tears.

“Theia-chan, please just shoot the enemy!”

“The shots are properly calculated, you're all right after all.”

The bullets Theia was using had the effect of paralyzing the enemy. The lethality of these bullets was low and they didn't have the power to break through the defensive spells on Yurika. On top of that, the Blue Knight's automated aim was very accurate and only a very limited few stray bullets headed for Theia's allies. While things might change when firing a large quantity of bullets, the chances were next to none if it were just a few. Theia had determined that using a weapon with low power would allow her to defeat only her enemies in a melee. While Theia didn't say it out loud, she trusted in Yurika's magic.

The results were as Theia had expected as the underground people fell one after another. But Yurika wasn't happy at getting shot even though she might be safe.

“Don't shoot at me just because it's safe!!”

“Yurika-chan, if you don't like it, then you just have to not get hit.”

Shizuka who was with Yurika showed a confident smile. She could sense Theia's intention to attack and moved out of the line of fire. As a result, not a single bullet hit her.

“Please don't lump me together with a superhuman like yourself, Shizuka-san!!”

“You can do it too if you put your heart in it. Or can't you muster any motivation without Satomi-kun with you?”

Shizuka made small talk as she beat up a nearby soldier. From a light left jab into a right straight, and as her body was moving, she poured the momentum into a roundhouse kick. The soldier hit by the brilliant combo fell to the ground. The power from her attacks was great and the soldier stopped moving after collapsing. Since Shizuka was avoiding vital points, the soldier merely lost consciousness rather than die. The girls had a reason for not wanting to kill the enemy.

While they might be enemies, the radical faction were from the same place as Kiriha was. In order to avoid grudges from the People of the Earth, they wanted to keep the fatalities to a minimum. So it was only natural for Theia to use non-lethal weapons and for Shizuka to avoid vital points. Of course, the fact that they hated killing also played a big role in it.

“T-That's not it, but...”

“Yurika, quit spacing out and get to work! They're coming out in droves!”

Sanae shot an enemy using a bow and arrow created from her own spiritual energy. Dodging her arrow that split into 16 smaller arrows midair was difficult, and the soldiers was hit by several of the smaller arrows and fell. These soldiers were actually after Yurika. Yurika who was incredibly adaptable was seen as a big threat amongst the soldiers.

“S-Sorry, Sanae-chan! Fog Cloud – Modifier – Effective Time Twice!”

Yurika cast a spell to block the field of view of the approaching enemies. The enemy was attacking even while she was protesting. Now wasn't the time for her to whine.

“Yurika-sama, get behind us!”

“Nijino Yurika, you support us from the back! The band of knights will take the front!”

There were other enemies approaching Yurika, but these were stopped by Ruth and Maki. Ruth wore a mechanical looking armor and was armed with beam swords, and Maki had created a large blade stretching out from the top of her cane. The two stood in front of the enemy and prevented them from getting any closer to the others.

“Maki-san, be careful not to get too far out! Please keep our allies position in mind at all times!”

Ruth made full use of her armor's defensive function, breaking up the enemy waves. The output of her barrier was considerably high, and by expanding it further out, she could effectively block attacks against her allies. As she did that, Ruth attacked the enemies designated as high priority by her armor's artificial intelligence one after another with her beam swords set to paralysis mode.

“Understood, vice captain!”

Maki's role was more offensive than Ruth's. Using her large blade, she effectively attacked enemies that showed an opening. Ruth prevented the enemy from advancing while Maki thinned their numbers. The two had split into effective roles and stopped the enemy's approach.

That said, since their band of knights had only just recently been formed, their teamwork was still somewhat lacking. Maki especially had little experience fighting with others as during her time in Darkness Rainbow she had been fighting alone. As such, she had a

tendency not to consider her allies. Koutarou alone was one thing, but she had a hard time paying attention to all of her allies.

“Aika-san, wipe those guys out! I will protect you!”

“Kasagi-san?! Then please do!!”

However, while Maki struggled to work together with her allies, her allies protecting her was another example of teamwork. Since this way of fighting was completely different from what Maki was used to, she had a lot of hesitation. However, she firmly believed that this was her true appearance and that she was far stronger than before.

Like that, the unique teamwork of the girls of room 106 was demonstrated and the diversion team's battle was progressing in their favor. But when it came to teamwork, the Sun Rangers weren't losing.

“Let's go, Daisaku!”

“Yeah. After I charge in, please back me up, Hayato-kun!”

In the past, they had been a disordered mob, but now the five had clearly divided up their roles.

In the front was the large man skilled in martial arts, Yellow Shine, Daisaku. He dealt with the enemy's vanguard. Pink Shine, Megumi, used an automatic gun to restrain the rear of the enemy formation. Defeating the enemy was the job of the skilled shooter, Blue Shine, Hayato, who used a rifle to pick off the enemies one by one. The job of Green Shine, Kotarou, was to throw the enemy into disarray. He used explosives as his weapon of choice for this. And finally, holding a sword in his right hand and a gun in his left was Red

Shine, Kenichi. He adapted to the situation and provided backup where it was needed.

“Calm down, Daisaku, Hayato! Our job isn't to defeat the enemy!”

“Kenichi is right! We need to buy time for Baron-sama and the others!”

Their teamwork was splendid and they no longer carelessly took action like they did in the past.

The Sun Rangers hadn't rolled their thumbs and done nothing these past few months. They trained to get strong, and through battle they dug up their problems, and through their efforts they had acquired adequate ability, mentality, and teamwork.

Under the command of Kenichi, the five fought a splendid battle. That said, there was a difference in equipment and their results were nowhere near that of Theia and the others. However, it was clear to anyone that they were more skilled than your average soldier.

“But Kenichi-niichan, something's strange.”

“What do you mean?”

“Take a good look. The weapons that Daisaku-niichan and Megumi-neechan photographed aren't coming to attack at all. And that robot that attacked when we were escaping isn't here either.”

“Now that you mention it...”

The experience they had piled up until today told that them there was something unnatural about this fight. This was supposedly a

weapons production facility, yet none of those weapons were anywhere to be seen, despite several weapons being caught on photograph earlier in the day, nor was the robot that had attacked them shown itself. The enemy consisted solely of underground people, and their weapons were just the ones they were carrying. The Sun Rangers who had prepared themselves for a fierce fight felt like they lost their momentum.

"... If you'd like, I can tell you the reason for that."

That was when the cold and sharp voice of a woman cut through the noise of the fierce battle. The moment that voice rang out both friend and foe stopped fighting.

"Maya-sama?!"

"It's been a while, Maki."

The voice belonged to the previous Darkness Navy, Maya. She was Maki's master. Maya, who had approached in a grand manner, stopped and faced Maki from a few meters away.

Maya-sama... she means business...

When she faced her master, a cold shiver ran down Maki's spine. Maya crossed her arms as if showing off her large bosom. She seemed defenseless despite her provoking behavior. However, Maki couldn't seem to find a single opening. To Maki, Maya looked like a ferocious beast that could rip her opponent's head off in the blink of an eye.

Maki stared at Maya with a sharp glance, looking for openings, while readying her large blade. Her stance was slightly smaller than

it had been up until now. Maki knew that she wouldn't catch Maya with any large attacks better than anyone else.

“Oh, scary. Maki, you don't need to be so scared. I only came because I wanted to see your face for the first time in a while. I'll leave after playing with you for a little while.”

Maya didn't seem shaken in the slightest despite her apprentice pointing a weapon towards her. Maya knew that the current Maki couldn't win against her. She showed a confident expression and her white teeth could be seen peeking out from under her lips. It was a feminine smile from a beautiful adult woman. However, what could be felt from her smile was more akin to a beast baring her fangs.

“And if you're gonna make such a scary face, you'll give away your act of being caught by the enemy. Fufufu.”

“M-Maya-sama?!”

Maki was shaken up by what Maya pointed out. Since Maya had appeared so suddenly, Maki had forgotten her own supposed standpoint. She would have needed a more self-controlled reaction.

“Don't worry, Maki. I don't really care whose side you are on. Not up until now nor from now on...”

“Eh...”

However, Maya's next words shook Maki up even more. Maya had more or less understood Maki's betrayal and left her alone until today.

“But, Maki, I don't hate your current self.”

Maya showed a truly happy smile. As her master, or maybe as one of her few comrades. It was a pure smile void of any evil, though it only lasted for a few seconds.

“Realize your wish with your own powers. That is the kind of life you're living now. It wasn't until you parted with Darkness Rainbow that you finally embodied the ideal of the organization. How ironic.”

When Maki was in Darkness Rainbow, she desired others to be sincere. The reason for that was because she had been betrayed by those close to her in her youth. But there was no perfect human. Every person lied in some way or another. That's why Maki always felt an irritation towards her surroundings.

Maya didn't like that part of Maki. She believed that Maki shouldn't restrain her irritation, but rather act as she pleased. In other words, she should use magic to force people to be sincere. Changing the world to something more convenient for yourself was Darkness Rainbow's style.

However, after parting with Darkness Rainbow, Maki had been freed from her irritation. That was because what Maki truly wanted wasn't people's sincerity, but what lay beyond. Love. Creating love using magic was sad. All she would get was a false love, something Maki hated. That's why the power of magic couldn't change Maki's world.

Maki was now using the power of magic to prevent what she had gotten from being stolen from her. The sight of Maki being honest about her feelings, even if those were feelings of love, was more prefered by Maya. Since Maki parted with Darkness Rainbow, she

had started acting more like a proper member of Darkness Rainbow.

On top of that, the relationship between the members of Darkness Rainbow was shallow and using your allies was common place. That's why Maya didn't care if Maki had betrayed them. That was only obvious. In fact, she was pleased that Maki had become a full-fledged member of Darkness Rainbow. As a result, she never told anyone of Maki's betrayal.

Good and evil didn't matter to Maya. Creating a world more suitable for yourself through magic was the embodiment of Darkness Rainbow's ideals.

“Then you should understand, Maya-sama. Even if I'm going up against you, I will defeat you.”

Maki pointed the tip of her blade towards Maya. Her hands were trembling slightly from her tension and sweat was sliding down her forehead. If she let her guard down by even a little, she would be taken out in an instant. Since Maya knew Maki's hand, she was close to her worst possible opponent.

“That's right, that's what it should be like. However—”

As Maya spoke, a blade popped out of her artificial arms.

“—I will kill anyone who opposes me, even if it's you, Maki!”

As Maya finished speaking she moved. Her movements were so fast that most people struggled just tracking her with their eyes.

“Nightwalker! Recall – Precast – Category Alpha!”

One of the few that didn't was Maki. Instead, she released ten or so spells that she prepared beforehand to drastically increase her physical abilities.

“Maya-sama!”

Maya's blade came into contact with the blade that had popped out from Maya's right arm. Having drastically increased her physical abilities, Maki was barely able to keep up with Maya.

“Well done stopping it, that's my number one apprentice!”

Yet despite having her attack stopped, Maya seemed happy. She was glad seeing the growth of her apprentice.

“But you're too naive!”

Even then, Maya didn't stop her attack. Even if it was her apprentice, an enemy was an enemy. While Maya was happy to see her apprentice's growth, she would kill her without mercy.

Maya had the upper hand when it came to both weight and power, and she forcibly pushed Maki back and unleashed a kick towards Maki's head. Since Maya's body was supported by a strong frame of alloy, a kick to the head would cause major damage.

“Energy Release!”

Maki's senses told her that she wouldn't be able to dodge the kick normally. So instead, she released the magical power in her cane. The magical blade formed on top of Maki's cane required a large quantity of magical power, and by releasing that, she could create a small explosion.

“You're as reckless as always, Maki!”

The shock wave from the explosion threw Maya's kick off track, but Maki herself was also hurt by it. Compared to Maya who had a mechanical body, Maki who had a body made of flesh obviously took more damage. Maki

believed that the damage from the explosion was less than getting hit by the kick, but it was still reckless like Maya had said.

“... My master isn't someone you can beat through normal means.”

While staggering from the explosion, Maki readied her cane once more. Her eyes were unwavering and she was still desperate to beat Maya.

“I'm glad to hear you say that.”

However, for some reason, Maya retracted the blades extended from her arms.

“Maya-sama?”

Since Maya had the advantage, this action confused Maki. Since she was her apprentice, Maki knew better than anyone that Maya couldn't be underestimated.

“I told you. I only came to see your face today.”

Maya noticed Maki's confusion. While her battle with Maki was fun, seeing Maki confused like this was also fun. She smiled as if her excitement from before had been a lie.

“If I'm going to fight you, I will prepare a more suitable stage. Not at a place like this where people will get in the way.”

Maya had several reasons for stopping, but the biggest reason was because she hated interruptions. While Maya would have been able to overwhelm her opponents for a while after a surprise attack, Theia and the others wouldn't stay quiet afterwards. In fact, Shizuka was almost at Maki's side already. If she had continued, Maya probably would have been in danger. The current Maki wasn't alone anymore.

“Besides, I just received word that our boy has been found over there.”

“Boy... you mean Satomi-kun?!”

Maya and the others' target was Koutarou. Everything else was just a bonus. Even her apprentice, Maki. Maya had come here because they didn't know where Koutarou was. While they had quickly figured out that Maki and the others were a diversion, they didn't know if Koutarou was taking part in the infiltration or the diversion. Since their strategy would change depending on where Koutarou was, Maya had to visit the site to confirm it with her own eyes.

And she hadn't found Koutarou amongst the diversion team. Next, she received a message from inside the factory, letting her know that Koutarou was infiltrating it. Knowing that, Maya no longer had any reason to remain here.

"That's right... Koutarou, my dear beloved boy... and that's the reason why our main forces haven't come here. I'm sure the boy and his friends are struggling."

This was also the reason why the weapons in the factory hadn't appeared. Maya and the others had placed their main force inside, preparing a trap. And as they had expected, Koutarou had appeared. In other words, the underground people dealing with Theia's and the others' diversion was yet another diversion to conceal their main force.

"Well then, good bye Maki. Let's meet again."

After casually saying her farewell as if speaking to a friend, Maya turned her back towards Maki.

"Maya-sama?! W-Wait, Maya-sama!!"

Maki wanted to chase after Maya, but the People of the Earth soldiers got in her away, leaving her unable to follow. While the soldiers were keeping Maki busy, all she could do was watch as Maya walked away.

"Still... it's been a while since I played with the boy... Fufu, I can't wait."

Maya's steps were light. She was like a woman about to reunite with her lover.

Secret Weapon

Part 1

Saturday, July 3

A little bit before Maya appeared in front of Maki, Koutarou and the others had reached the loading dock of the factory.

They had to evade soldiers patrolling the area while making their way here, but fortunately, thanks to the powers of science, magic and spiritual energy, Koutarou and the others succeeded in making it past them.

While making their way here, Koutarou and the others had taken a look at the production line. As a result, they had gotten a grasp of what was being made in the factory. All that was left was finding out how they were being used, so they continued their investigation.

"...It looks like they're carrying them out on those trailers."

Koutarou peeked out from a small crane in the corner of the loading dock. The loading dock was large with space for several trailers, and containers filled with the weapons being produced were being loaded in one after another. There were guns, bullets, small combat vehicles, large-scale ordnance and even mechanical soldiers. They were merciless weapons made only to kill people.

Looking at the containers filled with weapons, Koutarou instinctively grabbed a hold of Kiriha's hand.

Kiriha-san gave it her all to avoid this... this is completely different from Kiriha-san's invasion...

The invasion in front of him was violence itself. A nightmare that would spread death. It was the complete opposite of Kiriha's peaceful invasion. Compared to this, the path that Kiriha and the conservative faction had chosen was far more prideful. As far as Koutarou knew, Kiriha's weapons of invasion were brooms and garbage bags.

This invasion had to be stopped no matter what, and Kiriha's peaceful invasion had to be continued. It was those feelings that caused Koutarou to squeeze Kiriha's hand even harder.

"...Looks like it."

Kiriha only responded to Koutarou's words. However, Koutarou's feelings had been conveyed to her as well. That's why Kiriha squeezed Koutarou's hand back just as hard. Their fingers intertwined and their hands were interlocked. However, their hearts were even more strongly interlinked.

"Then how about we destroy those trailers, Bertorion?"

Clan proposed an attack on the trailers. If they destroyed the trailers with a properly timed attack the weapons wouldn't be carried away. This might be a good chance at reduce the radical faction's combat power.

"No, it would be better to let it go. I want to find out where the weapons are being carried."

Koutarou basically agreed with Clan's idea, but he believed it would be a better idea to leave it be so they could find the enemy's base.

“But Satomi-kun, are you okay with letting that many weapons fall into the hands of radical people?”

Harumi furrowed her brows and showed a concerned expression. The amount of weapons put into the containers was abnormal. If left be it was clear that the lives of many would be in danger. Wouldn't it be bad to leave it be. That was an obvious doubt.

Kiriha gave answer to Harumi's doubts.

“Harumi, sadly, considering the scale of this factory, that is just a fraction of the weapons. Even if we destroy all the weapons in the trailers it would hardly influence the situation. And if that is the case then it's better letting the trailers go and locating the enemy base. If we can prevent a battle from breaking out, it would have more of an effect then destroying the trailers. We want to bet on that.”

“I see...”

Kiriha explained what Koutarou was thinking even more accurately. As a result, Harumi understood the complicated circumstances. It was hard for Kiriha herself to allow for those weapons to be spread out, but if she didn't it would lead to an even bigger tragedy. It was for the best to endure it and find out where the trailers were headed.

“Clan, do you have a transmitter of some sort?”

“I do. Please wait a moment.”

Clan shoved her hand into her bag and rustled through its contents. Harumi smiled cheerfully upon seeing Clan's appearance.

“Fufufu, Clan-san, you have everything don't you?”

“When it comes to shady things, feel free to leave it to Clan.”

“You better remember that Bertorion, once we get back you're going to get it... and, here it is.”

Clan pulled out a small capsule device from her bag and placed it on Koutarou's palm. It was the kind of transmitter the Schweiger family prefered using.

“Once you attach this to a surface is will automatically activate and transmit a signal.”

“But wouldn't it be noticed if it started transmitting a signal now?”

“There are no problems. It's possible to put it on a standby mode so it won't send out a signal for a set amount of time. It's also possible to set it to activate when it no longer detects a specific signal.”

Clan operated her bracelet and changed the settings of the transmitter.

The transmitter would be first be set on standby mode for an hour. And during that hour the unmanned scout in the sky would track the trailers with its camera. Once an hour passed or the unmanned scout could no longer track it, the transmitter would begin emitting a signal. Doing this should lower the risk of the enemy noticing.

“Got it? All that's left is attaching them to the trailers.”

“Thank you Clan, you're a lifesaver.”

Koutarou grasped the transmitter with his right hand and tapped Clan's shoulder with his left hand two, three times. While it may have been a bit too violent of expression of gratitude towards a princess, everyone knew that a more violent expression of gratitude was closer to Koutarou's true self. That's why, while Clan was frowning she was secretly happy.

“Geez, you're so violent...”

“Well then, I'll be right back. Everyone wait here.”

“Satomi-kun, please wait. I'll cast a spell that will make it harder to see you.”

“Please do.”

Koutarou carefully approached the trailers to attach the transmitter after having Harumi cast the camouflage spell on him.

Part 2

The loading dock was large with lots of places to hide. On top of that, the soldiers were busy with work and therefore weren't paying much attention to their surroundings. Only the few soldiers patrolling the area was a problem, but with Koutarou's careful actions and Harumi's spell, he was able to make it past them. As a result, a few minutes after setting out, Koutarou had attached five transmitters.

“It seems he's attached the fifth one.”

Clan observed Koutarou through her binoculars. After attaching a transmitter underneath the fifth trailer, Koutarou signaled Clan

with his hands. One could gather that he hadn't bumped into any problems attaching the transmitters from his appearance.

“Kurano-san, Satomi-kun is on his way back.”

“I see, thank you, Harumi.”

After Harumi reported Clan's words to Kiriha, Kiriha looked up from her hand and let out a sigh of relief. She had been looking down because she had been praying for Koutarou's safety. Harumi smiled and looked down at Kiriha's hands.

“You look at that card from time to time... is it something important?”

In Kiriha's hands was a silver card. On it was a hero based on a beetle, posing. It was a strange belonging for one of the more feminine of the girls of room 106. That's why Harumi figured that it might hold a special meaning to Kiriha.

“This is... something I was given by my first love. It was from ten years ago, no, it's already eleven years now.”

Kiriha showed a nostalgic smile and turned to look at Koutarou who was returning. In her eyes was a deep love, the same kind of look she had given her card. That's why Harumi understood the circumstances right away.

Satomi-kun said he had met with a young Kiriha-san on his way back from the past... so this is from that time... and Kiriha-san has always felt for Satomi-kun since then. She really loves him...

Harumi had first met Koutarou a year and a few months ago. Since Harumi had Alaia's memories it felt like two years however. That's

why Harumi knew how Kiriha felt. The feeling of wanting to stay by Koutarou's side, the feeling of wanting to be needed by him were bursting out from her chest. They were fierce yet gentle feelings. The other girls of room 106 probably shared these feelings.

“Then it's a very important memory.”

“That's right. I've given my all with this as my support.”

“Bertorion is only ever kind to Kii. He'll take her out to play and give her presents. He only ever uses me as someone convenient.”

“..I do what?”

That was where Koutarou returned. Unaware of the topic the girls were talking about, he was confused as to why Harumi and Kiriha were smiling but Clan was sulking.

“It's nothing!”

“We were talking about how you were always relying on Clan-san.”

“Well, Clan is good at what I'm bad at. It's a big help.”

“Hmm.”

“But Clan is terrible at housework... speaking of which, I'll be coming to clean up your lab again soon. You've probably made a mess.”

“Cleaning... fufufu, why Clan-san, you are being treated kindly after all.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Well, actually—”

“N-No, no no!! Don't say anymore Harumi!!”

Clan shook her head and interrupted Harumi. She then attempted to change the topic while she was at it.

“Bertorion, it's about time we move on!”

“Hm? Yeah, you're right, let's move on.”

While he was interested in what Harumi had to say, they weren't in a situation where they could casually chat. Koutarou obediently agreed with Clan.

“So, what do we do next?”

“Uhm, t-that's...”

Koutarou urged Clan ahead, but she was stumbling for words. Since she had only brought it up to change the topic, she hadn't put any thought into where to go. That was when Kiriha saved Clan from her situation.

“Koutarou, I think we should head towards this factory's control room.”

“Control room? Why?”

“If we examine the computers in the control room we can find out how many weapons have been made and where they've been sent. I want to see the whole image of the enemy.”

Kiriha hadn't spoken out just to help Clan. She had originally wanted to head to the control room. They had found out what kind of weapons had been produced from the production line, that was left was how many had been made and where they are.

“Got it. So Clan, where is that control room?”

“If it's been placed logically, then it should be placed where it can easily access all of the production line. In that case, it should be in the center of the factory.”

At this time, Clan had regained her usual composure. While speaking, Clan pointed towards the center of the factory. While they were hugging a wall and couldn't see it, Clan's intuition told her that the control room was in that direction.

Part 3

Like Clan had suspected, the control room was at the center of the factory. As a result, they reached the control room without ever really getting lost on the way.

“It was just like you said, Clan. Well done.”

“Clan-san is amazing.”

“You won't get anything from praising me.”

Clan slightly blushed from Koutarou and Harumi praising her. However, Kiriha alone had a serious expression, and noticing that, Koutarou asked Kiriha about it.

“What's wrong, Kiriha-san. You've got a stern face.”

“It's... I felt like something was strange.”

“Strange? What is?”

“The design of the factory is very logical. As a result we were able to come here without ever getting lost. However, it's too logical. Not even their factory's underground are this logical.”

Kiriha was bothered by the fact that this factory had an awfully different atmosphere to it when compared to the factories underground.

While the People of the Earth had more advanced technology than the people on the surface, they didn't need to mass produce a lot due to their low population. That's why when it came to productive techniques, they fell behind the surface dwellers. The narrow underground world was an environment where it was difficult to obtain the knowhow to make an effective factory.

Yet, this factory had been made incredibly logically. Upon seeing this factory, Kiriha felt like she was watching at a design on a completely different league.

“The magicians are working with the radical faction, maybe they brought with them people that are skilled in production.”

Clan simply thought that someone well versed in production on the surface had been brought in to help. With the evil magicians on their side, it wasn't something that hard.

“I hope that's all...”

However, Kiriha's line of thinking didn't match up with Clan's. It was hard for her to imagine that those that sought to make the

People of the Earth the supreme race would use surface dwellers, even though it was needed. It was a completely different situation from accepting the magicians who came from a different world. That said, the weapons the enemy soldiers were using was another cause for worry, poking at Kiriha.

“Kiriha-san, nothing will come from worrying about that here. Let's investigate the control room to find out the reason.”

“...You're right. Let's try entering.”

Temporarily shelving their doubts, Koutarou and the others decided to enter the control room. However, the door to the control room had an electronic lock on it. It was Clan's turn once more.

“Please wait a moment.”

Clan opened up the cover to the electronic lock and connected it to her bracelet with a cable. Once she did, she ran a program to analyze the lock. The code needed to open the lock was 16 characters long and the bracelet revealed the characters one after another.

“...Alright, I'm done.”

With the code needed to undo the electronic lock revealed, Clan entered it on the panel. As she did, the door slid open sideways with almost no sound, showing how precise even this door had been made.

“Sakuraba-senpai.”

“Yes!”

Once the door opened, Koutarou and Harumi charged into the control room. If there were enemies inside the control room, they needed to be incapacitated right away. In that case, it was Harumi's time to shine as she could use magic. And it was Koutarou's duty to protect her.

“Huh?”

“There's... no one here.”

However, going against their expectations, the control room was unmanned. All that was there were large monitors displaying the factory and various computers. There was noone around operating them.

“That's strange. It's hard to believe that they'd send the people in here to deal with the diversion as well.”

Next, Kiriha entered, but stopped and tilted her head in confusion. She had a bad feeling she couldn't shake.

“Regardless of the reason, we'll still need to investigate this room.”

Clan pushed Kiriha forward along with her into the control room. Kiriha didn't resist and was pushed to the very center of the room. While she thought it was strange, she still had to investigate.

“Clan, you may take care of that administrator's computer over there. I will examine the main computer right here.”

“I got it, Kii. Let's finish this quickly.”

The two skilled with computers, Kiriha and Clan, immediately began collecting information. While copying the data they took a

look for any noticable data. In this situation, Koutarou and Harumi who were bad at technology were simple observers.

“...Satomi-kun, it's a good thing it wasn't just the two of us that came here.”

“Who knows what would have happened if Kiriha-san and Clan weren't here..”

While Koutarou and Harumi were unable to do anything, Kiriha's and Clan's investigation was progressing smoothly. A while after their investigation began, both of them had found data that stood out.

“Koutarou, this is bad!”

The first one to speak was Kiriha who was investigating the main computer.

“What is it?!”

Koutarou hurriedly rushed over to Kiriha upon hearing her panicked voice and seeing her anxious and tense expression.

“Take a look at this! It appears to be the blueprint for a large-scale weapon!”

“What the heck is this?!”

On the screen of the computer that Kiriha was investigating was a huge structure reaching over ten meters. It seemed to be a weapon like she had said, but it was just so big it looked like a building.

“I can't tell you any details until I look into it more, but it appears that this is a weapon that can cause a massive earthquake over a large area!”

“You're saying that they're planning on using this to randomly attack the surface?!”

As it was a massive weapon, it's blueprint took up a large amount of data. Having noticed it, Kiriha casually opened it up, but its contents came as a huge surprise.

This weapon would stimulate the spiritual energy running through the planet, known as ley lines, at a certain point and disrupt the flow of energy. That disruption would spread through the earth's crust and cause a massive earthquake. If left alone, Japan would be struck by a natural disaster with an unprecedented scale. The cities would cease to function and the coastline region would be swept away by tsunamis.

“Kiriha-san, if they use this something unimaginable will happen to the surface!”

“It won't just be the surface! An earthquake of this scale wouldn't leave my hometown unscathed either! No, maybe that's their goal?!”

Living underground, the People of the Earth were easily affected by earthquakes. As they were producing an earthquake inducing weapon, the radical faction must have noticed these risks.

The radical faction's goals were options. There were mainly two of them.

First they would attack using a method that the people of the surface wouldn't realize was an attack. The surface dwellers don't know that earthquakes can be caused artificially. They would simply assume it was a natural disaster. After destroying the surface they would march forward with their army and occupy the city. Since this would happen after a massive earthquake and tsunami, there was no way to prevent this invasion.

Their other goal was to destroy the hometown of the People of the Earth. By robbing them of their homes, they would force them into a situation where they had to rise to the surface. If the surface dwellers found out that the People of the Earth had caused the earthquake they wouldn't be able to tell the difference between the conservative and the radical faction and would attempt to annihilate the entirety of their race. That's why by threatening to disclose information would force the conservatives that had lost their homes to cooperate with the radical faction.

“How can the radical faction do something like this?! They would attack even the home they grew up in?!”

Harumi who had heard the conversation let out a scream-like voice. She couldn't believe what she was hearing. It was the same as she destroying the city she grew up in. She couldn't believe this was something a sane person would do.

“While the underground is the home to us in the conservative faction, the radical faction only thinks of it as a humiliating prison! They wouldn't hesitate to destroy their prison to reclaim their true home!”

The conservative faction had accepted the underground as their home. Having lived there for so long they thought of it as their own

country filled with memories and history. But since their decline could no longer be avoided, they had steeled themselves to abandon their home.

However, the radical faction didn't feel that way. They didn't think of the underground as their home. They felt like they had been robbed of their true home and forced underground. Unable to forget that unfortunate history they spent their days teeming with hatred. That's why they probably wouldn't hesitate to destroy the underground. To them, it was a false history, something that should never have happened.

“But that's too much!!”

“Calm down, Sakuraba-senpai! We only have to prevent that from ever happening!”

“Y-Yes.”

Harumi had fallen into confusion for a moment, but Koutarou's powerful words snapped her out of it.

Satomi-kun really is strong, regardless of how many years pass... He’ll protect everyone just like he did in the past... I should stop crying and think about something I can do...

Harumi wiped away the tears forming in her eyes and changed gears. She began thinking of something that she could do.

“Kiriha-san, is that weapon here?!”

Koutarou's idea was clear. If there was something that dangerous, it should be destroyed, and as quickly as possible. If it was in this place, it should be destroyed right now.

“It seems like they only made the core of this weapon here. It seems like the weapon itself is being made somewhere else.”

“They're not making all of it here?! Then where?!”

“There's a record on this computer here!”

As for where the earthquake weapon in question was, Clan had found a record on the computer she was investigating. Since she was investigating the administrator's computer, she had information of how much of what was being made and where it was being taken.

“Since it's a secret, it seems like the accurate location and name of the place are being kept hidden, but it seems to be on one of the islands off the coast of Kitsushouharukaze city. The word island is being used frequently.”

“So that's why they only made their core here!”

“What do you mean, Kiriha-san?”

“If they're using an earthquake inducing weapon then it would be more efficient to place it near the borders of a plate rather than inland. If they want to avoid being seen by the public, an uninhabited island off the coast would be the best choice. But the problem with an uninhabited island is securing water. Large quantities of water is usually required when manufacturing advanced products. When it comes to an uninhabited island, you'd either need to use seawater and thoroughly filter out the saline and impurities or dig for water underground. Since both would take a lot of time, the core itself was made in this factory.”

Since this was the core of a weapon capable of inducing earthquakes, it required an extremely accurate and advanced processing technology. One thing that was common in the production of precise electronic equipment was garbage on the particle scale. Particle scaled garbage primarily came from air or water. That's why factories producing precise electronics gathered around cities near rivers with clean air.

“Clan, can you tell what island it is?”

“I've only given it a rough look, but it seems that it's being completely covered up...”

“Then I guess we have to check everything. Clan, pick up all the islands offshore.”

Off the shore of Kitsushouharukaze city were several islands and Koutarou believed that they would have to check all of them. In that case, they would be better off going now as there was no guarantee that they would find the earthquake weapon right away.

“Wait, Satomi-kun!”

Koutarou was about to head off to investigate the islands, but that was when Harumi stopped him.

“What's the matter, Sakuraba-senpai?”

“Won't one of those trailers from before head to the island?”

“Ah...”

There was a good chance that one of the five trailers that had gotten transmitters attached to them would head towards the island in question. The radical faction would have to protect the weapon after all.

“Great idea, Sakuraba-senpai! Clan!”

“There's a record on the computer! One of the trailers will be heading to the island in question!”

“Don't lose sight of that one! If you do, you'll be punished!”

“What a stupid request! Just who do you think I am?!”

“I'm counting on you, princess. Our future is depending on you.”

“Please, Clan-oneechan.”

“...Leave it to me. If Bertorion is going to call me princess and you are calling me oneechan, then I shall let you win!”

Clan's eyes behind her glasses shone as she nodded and began busily operating her bracelet, sending orders to the Cradle that's on standby in the sky. The People of the Earth's and Koutarou and the others' fate rested on the unmanned scouts that would track the trailers.

Part 4

After finishing their information gathering, Koutarou and the others headed towards the exit of the control room. Using their obtained information as their basis, there was a ton of things that needed to be done.

“Kii, I've sent Theiamillis-san and the others the sign to withdraw through the Cradle.”

“Thank you. After grouping up with Theia-dono and the rest we should head straight towards the island. There's no time to lose.”

“Sakuraba-senpai, how's your body holding up?”

“I'm feeling just fine.”

“I see... then let's go.”

Waiting for the four to gather by the door, Koutarou opened the door. Just like when they had entered, the door slid to the side to open. However, the scenery on the other side was different from when they had entered.

Past the door was a large passage, over ten meters wide. It was a passage that looked like it could house several lanes of traffic. And in the passage was a man that Koutarou and Kiriha had seen before.

“It's been a while, Kurano's daughter, and the brat.”

“Tayuma! As expected, you were here!”

Kiriha glared at the man, Shijima Tayuma. However, Tayuma had a grin and look that was looking down on her.

“As expected is my line. As expected, you fell into my trap, Kurano's daughter.”

“What?!”

Upon hearing the word trap, Koutarou's expression changed, and Tayuma showed Koutarou a condescending smile.

“You're slow as always, brat. You think we'd leave the control room unmanned for no reason?”

“...You used it as a trap.”

Koutarou began understanding the situation. The moment the diversion team appeared, Tayuma and the other expected that there would be another team that would infiltrate. And if a second team existed they would without fail head towards the control room filled with secrets. There, they would all be all swept up. The control room had only one entrance. Once they had been lured in their path of retreat would be cut off and they would be trapped.

“Then the factory's security on the inside was lax for the same reason?”

“Fufun, at least Kurano's daughter is quick on the draw. That's correct. Why would we waste soldiers if we didn't know where you'd enter. All we had to do was place our soldiers in an ambush around the area you were guaranteed to go to, the control room, just like this.”

Radical faction soldiers appeared from the darkness of the passage. There were twelve of the robots that had appeared during the daytime. On the opposite side of them were four large machines guns, moved by wheels that would automatically track their targets. Both were weapons that had been produced in this factory.

“So your target was Kiriha-san from the very beginning.”

“That's right. If we stimulate her sense for danger, Kurano's daughter would have no choice but to appear in hopes to find information. Just like Maguz-sama planned.”

“Maguz...? I see, so he's the mastermind...”

Koutarou lightly grinded his teeth. Koutarou knew that Tayuma wasn't all there was to tthe radical faction, so he wasn't all that surprised. However, he didn't think it would be easy to defeat someone that had planned this far ahead. He couldn't help but imagine how severe the future battle would be.

“Mastermind? Not at all. Maguz-sama is our supreme leader that will bring us People of the Earth a great future.”

Tayuma smiled proudly. He was fiercely loyal to Maguz.

“Despite that, you failed last year.”

“The outcome of that didn't matter. In truth. All the attention was gathered on me, allowing us to prepare for the war.”

Maguz had been pulling the strings behind Tayuma's attack last year.

Tayuma's goal back then was to have Kiriha or Tayuma himself killed by surface dwellers, which would draw the public opinion of the People of the Earth towards war. But having that fail gave the radical faction a reason to stay low.

In the foreground they were staying low, but in the background they were preparing for a large-scale war. If the radical faction became more inactive for no reason, there would be some that would question it. But with Tayuma defeated, there was no one that questioned their inactivity. They were able to earn several valuable months.

If Tayuma had succeeded the public opinion would sway. If he failed he would buy time for the radical faction to prepare for war. It was because he understood that, that Maguz listened to Tayuma's selfish demands and sent him to the surface.

“Maguz-sama is a great, broad minded person who even takes what someone as insignificant as me says into consideration. He is not someone the likes of you could ever defeat!”

Tayuma had a wide smile. Koutarou and the others were already in the middle of his trap. It was a smile of conviction.

“I won't let things go as you plan, Tayuma! I will capture you here, and Maguz right after!”

Kiriha sent a sharp glance and words at Tayuma.

I don't like that face... then!

Koutarou preferred Kiriha's normally gentle expression. Just like how he didn't want Yurika to be a magical girl, he didn't want Kiriha to be a commander in a battle. He wanted her to be her normal kind self and he wanted Kii to be her innocent self.

If Kiriha would have this expression as long as she had enemies, then those enemies needed to be defeated as swiftly as possible. Koutarou once more made up his mind and clenched his fist.

"Fuahaha. Sadly I can't agree to your demands. I will take my leave for today."

"Tayuma?!"

However, Tayuma turned his back to Koutarou and the others. He had no intentions of fighting himself. The crowd of weapons moved and protected his back.

"Wait, Tayuma!"

"Kurano's daughter, if you wish to fight against me you'll first needed to defeat these. Well, neither Maguz-sama and I care if you die or survive this."

Tayuma didn't listen to Kiriha and calmly left the passage. Koutarou and the others wanted to rush up and catch him, but the 16 weapons stood in their way. They couldn't do anything else until they destroyed these.

"...I'm sorry, Koutarou. And to you too, Clan, Harumi. The enemy is more troublesome than I thought."

Tayuma calmly walked down the passage and disappeared behind a corner. After seeing that, Kiriha grinded her teeth in frustration. She realized how naive she had been.

“Don't sweat it.”

Koutarou smiled at Kiriha. When she looked into his eyes she noticed that they were different from normal. They held a strong determination in them.

“Once this is all over, I'll be satisfied as long as you give me a kiss with a smile.”

“...Koutarou...”

Those words alone caused Kiriha's strength to leave his shoulders.

That’s right... this is the kind of person Onii-chan has always been...

Some of the anxiety she felt from her blunders was replaced with courage. Kiriha placed her hand above the card inside her clothes and smiled as she thought of feelings placed in it.

“Fufu... now you've said it. Then let's hurry up and end this so I can rain kisses down upon you.”

“I'll look forward to it... Blue Knight, give me my sword.”

“As you wish, my lord.”

Kiriha felt that no matter how strong he was, holding a weapon just didn't suit Koutarou. And for that reason as well, she wanted to reach a conclusion as quickly as possible.

Part 5

The enemies attacked at the same time that Koutarou readied Signaltin. Because of that, the enemies attacks were slightly faster.

Immediately the shrill sound of motors, the four machine guns opened fire at the same time. They each had their own target and a rain of bullets rained down upon all of the members of the infiltration team.

“Deploy the distortion field over a wider area!”

“Karama, Korama, Spiritual Energy Field to maximum output!”

However, before the bullets could hit two barriers stood in their way. It was Clan's personal barrier and the spiritual energy barrier created by the two haniwas. But these two sturdy barriers were spread over a wide area, and only managed to slow the bullets.

“Come, spirits of wind! Dance around and become a whirl, show your great powers capable of traversing the world! Blow it all away! Shielding Wind!”

However, the slightly delayed third barrier completely stopped the slowed bullets. The third barrier was a spell created by Harumi using ancient magic.

“Everyone, focus on the machine guns first! We can't have them moving around freely!”

Koutarou gave orders behind the three and swung his sword at the mechanical soldiers. It was his job to slow down as many of the mechanical soldiers as possible.

I won't lose to these one on one, but...

But going up against twelve was troublesome. These had been made by the same technology as Maya's body, and while they couldn't move as fast as her, they were still quick. On top of that, they cooperated well during their attacks. While their cooperation wasn't as good as the Motor Knights that Elexis had used, combined with their speed it was a handful. And most of all there were a lot of them. While Koutarou could read their movements as they were powered by spiritual energy, it was difficult dealing with twelve of them at once. As a result, four of them slipped past Koutarou and attacked the girls behind him.

"Kii, use this!"

"Thanks!"

The ones to deal with the oncoming four machines were Clan and Kiriha. The two were using weapons that Clan had summoned and squared down with the four mechanical soldiers.

"Haa!"

Kiriha was using a naginata with a blade generating an intense heat. Well versed in military arts, Kiriha dexterously swung the naginata around and blocked the mechanical soldiers large claws.

"Keep it up, Kii!!"

Clan held a beam cannon in both hands and repeatedly shot at the mechanical soldier that had made contact with Kiriha. Since Clan was bad at melee combat, Kiriha naturally had to defend with the naginata while Clan use her beam cannon to attack.

While the Clan and Kiriha formed the second line of defense, Harumi aimed for the machine guns with her spell. While the barrier might block the machine guns' fire it didn't block the mechanical soldiers that had come up close. The machine guns needed to be destroyed as quickly as possible so the barriers could be redistributed.

“Gather, spirits of water! Dance, spirits of wind! Combine these two powers and appear, spirits of lightning! Oh dragon-like dark cloud, open your jaws and destroy!”

Harumi's hair shone with silver and chanted a spell as if it was a song. As her incantation continued a powerful electric charge gathered around her and shone as dazzlingly as lightning.

“Roar of Thunder!”

Upon finishing her incantation, Harumi opened her closed eyes and stared at the machine guns in front of her. As she did, the electric charge that had floated around her split into four and assaulted the machine guns.

With a loud roar, the lightning struck so close, it was like a massive hammer had slammed down on something. The roar echoed repeatedly off the walls of the passage. Since attack spells required the use of multiple elements at the same time, they were considered top level spells. Their effect were tremendous and a direct hit wouldn't leave one unscathed.

“It didn't work?! Why?!”

However, the machine guns were still functional. While they weren't completely unharmed they were still firing. Since she had

attacked Elexis' Motor Knights with this same spell, Harumi had no idea why it hadn't worked.

“Harumi-chan, it's barriers Ho!”

“They have Spiritual Energy Fields as well Ho! Elemental based attacks won't work Ho!”

Karama and Korama who also functioned on spiritual energy understood what had happened. The moment before the electricity had hit, the machine guns had activated their barriers and protected themselves. They made up for their slower moments with a sturdier barrier.

“What should I do, Karama-chan, Korama-chan?!”

“Earth, water, fire, wind and the higher-ranking spirits won't work Ho! It's what Spiritual Energy Fields specialize in Ho!”

“You can't convert the spirits' power Ho! You need to attack with pure power or magical power itself Ho!”

“Thank you, I'll give it a try!”

The spirits that the ancient magic of Forthorthe used where spirits that naturally resided in the world. That's why converting magical power into the spirits' power made it easier for the spiritual energy barriers to block. The compatibility between the two were the worst.

“To think they could withstand Sakuraba-senpai's magic.”

Koutarou was panicking a little from the unexpected development. Koutarou knew very well how powerful her spells were. While their barriers might specialize in guarding against it, they had

enough power to endure the attack. They were dangerous opponents that shouldn't be taken lightly.

“Nothing will come from complaining! Harumi will surely pull it off!”

“You're right. Let's believe in Sakuraba-senpai!”

Koutarou pushed aside his surprise after listening to Kiriha and focused on his own battle. While he had done some damage to them, the eight mechanical soldiers in front of him were still all present. If he lost his focus when dealing with these swift soldiers, he'd pay for it.

“Kii, we'll need to hold down the fort!”

“No problems. As long as it's just blocking, I should be able to do something!”

Clan and Kiriha were holding back the enemy as well. Their primary focus was keeping the enemy away from Harumi who would be in charge of the counteroffensive.

“This time... it will work...”

Harumi clasped her hands in front of her chest. Her friends were still fighting hard, and her judgment and actions would sway this battle. Harumi was nervous.

I can’t attack using the spirits’ powers... in that case!

Harumi mustered up her courage and began incanting once more.

“Oh great power that guards all, oh light of hope that shone in the beginning! Gather in front of me and become a sword to cut my enemies!”

Harumi's hair turned completely silver and her entire body was wrapped in a white light. Before long that light began gathering in her extended right hand. The gathered light grew brighter, and began extending forward from her hand. The extended light grew longer, thicker and brighter. It was a large sword of light born from Harumi's magical power.

“Cut them down! Royal Silver Sword!”

Finishing her incantation, Harumi swung her right hand. The light that had gathered in her hand followed her movement and swung with her. As the tip of the sword had pierced through the ceiling, it cut through the ceiling as the sword was brought down.

“What?!”

Koutarou was captivated by the pure-white light that passed by his side. It was such a shocking light that Koutarou forgot about his battle for an instant.

Without sound, the sword cut the machine gun on the right in half. Harumi then lightly flicked her wrist to the side and the sword of light cut down the other three as well. The light began disappearing there, but it also cut down two of the mechanical soldiers before completely vanishing.

“...Phew... it worked...”

After the light had disappeared Harumi looked down at her right hand and let out a small sigh. She didn't have any real confidence that this attack would work.

The spell Harumi had used gathered Signaltin's powers and discharged it directly. Since it was a rough move that only discharged pure magical power, Harumi didn't know if she could properly control it or not.

But fortunately it all worked out well. Since it was Signaltin's magical power, using it as a sword suited it well, and Alaia's feelings surely helped as well. That was what Harumi felt as she felt a huge relief.

“...Sakuraba-senpai is starting to look more and more like empress Alaia...”

Koutarou couldn't hide his surprise. Harumi had been playing Alaia's role on the scene, but lately she hadn't just been taking on the role of Alaia on stage, but also in real life. Alaia's memories, her beautiful silver hair, her control of Signaltin and its excess magical power through the use of ancient magic. The Silver Princess, Alaia, was in the process of reviving in the modern age using the normal girl Harumi, as her base.

No, this might her majesty Alaia's wish itself...

There, Koutarou realized that Harumi was Alaia's ideal itself.

Alaia had spent her life as a royalty of Forthorthe until her very last moment. But she had to throw away her own freedom and happiness for it. In contrast, Harumi was a normal girl who had inherited Alaia's appearance, powers and memories. In other words, the current Harumi should be incredibly close to what Alaia had been if she had been born as a normal girl. Koutarou also believed that Harumi's personality hadn't changed for the same reason.

Her majesty wouldn't take over someone else's life. Especially if that someone is her ideal itself...

As Koutarou was distracted by Harumi for an instant, the mechanical soldiers attacked. They were trying to tear him apart with their large claws.

“Oh crap?!”

Having been distracted, Koutarou's reaction was a little bit delayed. As a result, he exposed an opening for the soldiers to exploit.

“Look out!!”

However, the mechanical soldiers' claws were stopped by Kiriha's naginata the moment before they hit.

“This battle isn't over yet, don't let your guard down, Koutarou!”

From there, Kiriha used the naginata's blade and handle to unleash a flurry of attacks.

“Sorry. You saved me, Kiriha-san!”

Koutarou readied his sword again and attacked a nearby soldiers. With the machine guns destroyed, the battle had begun progressing in Koutarou's and the others' favor. With the barriers that had been used to block the machine guns freed up, they could make more bold attacks and the mechanical soldiers that outnumbered them began being pushed back.

“At this rate, I won't have any time to shine.”

“That's not true. It's because of Clan-san that we are here.”

“...You're good at flattering others, Harumi.”

“Flattering... but it's the truth.”

Next, Clan and Harumi began supporting, disrupting the mechanical soldiers cooperation, allowing for Koutarou and Kiriha to defeat the soldiers one after another. It didn't take many minutes for all of the mechanical soldiers to be destroyed. Looking at the result, the moment Harumi destroyed the four machine guns, their victory was assured.

Kiriha's Determination

Part 1

Saturday, July 3

While they had gathered the information they needed and everyone had safely returned to room 106, Kiriha's gloomy expression remained the same. Koutarou understood Kiriha's feelings, there were mountains of doubts.

"...Why didn't Tayuma try killing us?"

That was the biggest doubt in Koutarou's mind.

If more of the weapons produced in the factory had been sent at Koutarou and the others in the control room, they might have been killed as they had been trapped. But for some reason Tayuma hadn't done so and Koutarou couldn't understand why.

That was where Kiriha answered his doubts, having thought about it hard, she had already found the reason.

"He probably planned on killing the intruders at first. That was why he placed a trap by the control room."

The information the intruders would want is gathered in the control room, and a trap was placed around the room with only one entrance. Kiriha believed that the original plan was to kill the intruders on the spot.

"But on the way, they noticed that the intruders were us and changed their policy."

“What kind of policy would that be?”

“I can think of two reasons. The first is that Tayuma and the others want to learn of our abilities.”

If the intruders had been the Sun Rangers, they would have been wiped out. But it had been Kiriha and the others that came. That's why Tayuma changed his policy.

To Tayuma, Koutarou and the others were unknown enemies that had given him a hard time in the past, and there was a high chance that they would appear during the battle with the surface dwellers. With only a portion of them arriving at the control room, it would be better to find out about their abilities rather than trying to use force.

For that they threw a standard combat unit at Koutarou and the others. From the data taken on that, they would send in a force that would definitely win next time. That's why Tayuma had left full of confidence. There was no reason why they had to be defeated there.

“It should also be to give the People of the Earth information about the earthquake weapon.”

The other reason was believed to leak the knowledge of the earthquake weapon to the People of the Earth.

If the conservative faction left the earthquake weapon be, they would lose their home and be forced up to the surface and dragged into a battle. That said, even if they found out about it, there was no guarantee that the People of the Earth would believe it. There, decisive evidence was given to them through a definite route. The most definite route would be through the Kurano family leading the People of the Earth. If someone from that family were to find

evidence in the enemy base it would become very convincing. In other words, Kiriha was being used as a messenger to deliver this information to the conservative faction.

This could be considered a highly efficient method. In fact, having seen the information around the earthquake weapon with her own eyes, she was now moving to take measures against it. It was only a question of time before all of the conservative faction did the same.

“Damnit, so we're all moving in accordance to Tayuma's... no Maguz's plans...”

Koutarou grinded his teeth in mortification. Their opponent was always one step ahead of them. With that in mind, the chances are that it would stay that way in the future as well.

“So Kiriha, what will you do?”

Theia directed a severe glance, rarely seen in room 106 these days, at Kiriha. As she thought of what would happen next, she couldn't help but show the expression of a princess. Theia believed that battle was no longer anything that could be avoided.

“...I can't find one... a way to settle things without anyone getting hurt...”

But Kiriha still hadn't reached a conclusion. She could see several choices in front of her, but regardless of her choice, there would be casualties. That's why she didn't choose something she could see, but desperately sought after a different choice.

“There might be a choice where nobody gets hurt. But there's no time to find it. Kiriha, you need to take action right away.”

“I know... but...”

Kiriha bit her lip in frustration. In truth she actually knew that as well. In fact she had spoken to her father, Daiha, about the coming battle just the other day. Even though she knew, she couldn't accept that choice when faced with it.

Kiriha's actions were always based on kindness. Intelligent as she was, she always tried to stay on step ahead of others and made sure that problems never happened. Whether it was in politics or in private, she always strived for a conclusion where no one was hurt.

“My thoughts are that when your choices are limited and casualties can't be avoided, then the choice that will cause the least casualties is preferable.”

“But... hurting the surface dwellers or having them become enemies of the People of the Earth is something I can't accept.”

But because of that, she couldn't help but hesitate when faced with a decision that would cause casualties. She was completely different from Theia who acted just. Even though she knew she had no other choice, she couldn't make her mind up. Kiriha was at a loss. Her expression distorted with frustration and she strongly grasped her fist.

“...Kiriha-san.”

That was where Koutarou reached his hand out to Kiriha. He undid her clenched fist and held it.

“Koutarou...?”

Unable to understand his intentions, Kiriha stared at Koutarou. She had the expression of a child looking to her parents for answers, it was an expression that reminded Koutarou of how she had looked eleven years ago. That's why Koutarou smiled with all his might and talked to her in a gentle tone.

“If Kiriha-san and Kii-chan say they need me, then I will help in any way I can.”

When she was just a young girl, Kiriha had been too understanding. That's why if Koutarou had told her to what path to take, she likely would. However, Koutarou believed that wasn't good enough. While she might pretend to understand everything on the outside, she was deeply hurt inside.

“And if we fail even then, then I'll regret it together with you for as many decades as it takes.”

What Kiriha and Kii needed wasn't someone who told them what was right. Being smart, she already knew that. What she needed was just one thing. To be able wholly accept what she didn't want to speak.

“So tell me. What is it that Kiriha-san needs right now? What should I do?”

Koutarou knew that was the kind of girl she was, in the past and in the present. And he was going to accept anything she said. With that strong desire in his mind, he held Kiriha's hand.

“...Koutarou... Onii-chan...”

Kiriha was taken by surprise by Koutarou's words. He was saying that he would disregard good and evil, and side with Kiriha. Those

words reminded her of eleven years ago. Of Koutarou who had cried because of his own helplessness, and of herself, desperately trying to save him. Kiriha noticed that Koutarou was saying the same things she had back then, that he was accepting her weakness.

"...Thank you, Koutarou..."

That's why Kiriha squeezed Koutarou's hand back. In response to that, Koutarou squeezed her hand harder. Kiriha used her free hand to wipe away the tears that had started to fall. She was happy for Koutarou's feelings, but she had no time to cry. Right now she needed to take action before anything else.

"Please listen, Koutarou, and everyone else too."

After wiping away her tears, Kiriha raised her head. Not even the faintest trace of weakness could be felt from her anymore. Her expression had returned to that of a calm commander.

"From here on, we, the People of the Earth, will use armed force the stop the out of control radical faction."

As a member of the conservative faction, Kiriha herself was a pacifist. The fact that she had steeled herself for battle was a heavy one. That was how far the situation had progressed. And that was conveyed to the girls of room 106. Their connection ran deep.

"While it is deeply regrettable for the People of the Earth to fight against each other, we can't leave them be. we will capture the leaders of the radical faction, stop the use of the earthquake weapon and protect both the surface and the underground. For that end, we need your power!"

The radical faction were still People of the Earth. If possible, Kiriha didn't want to hurt them. In order to avoid that, she had desperately struggled until now. But she had now finally made up her mind. If she didn't, she wouldn't be able to protect anything. She couldn't sit and roll her thumbs while her hometown was brought to ruin.

“Please, lend me your power! The enemy is far to great for us alone to handle!”

The radical faction was strong. They had gathered huge funds without being noticed, had the help of magicians and were mass producing weapons. Their actions were also quick, and had brought the situation to this point. While the conservative faction had the number advantage, it would be hard to turn this situation around. That's why Kiriha needed the help of Koutarou and the other girls of room 106. While she didn't like involving them with her battle, she had no option choice.

“Fufun, I've been waiting for those words, Kiriha! You are my rival! I'll kick those radicals to the curb so we can return to our original fight!”

“Theia is right, Kiriha! We'll beat them up with a smash and bang and go play somewhere again! The summer vacation is almost here!”

“I will help too! Magic is being misused, so this is my job!”

“I'll go too. I can't let this be since Maya-sama is involved in this.”

“Kii, just leave this to me. You can relax and rely on me.”

“Master, what will the band of knights do?”

“The Satomi band of knights will all sorties. We are going to support the People of the Earth's conservative faction.”

“As you wish, my lord. I will stake my life to do so.”

“What will you do, Sakuraba-senpai.”

“I will help too of course. Kurano-san is my friend after all. What about you, Kasagi-san?”

“Me too. A landlord and tenant share mind and body. Right, uncle?”

“That’s right. I shall help too. I’m also interested in the underground country.”

The girls offer their help one after another. Not a single one was against it. There was not a single person in this place with a relationship so shallow they could abandon Kiriha in her predicament.

“Everyone... thank you...”

Kiriha's chest grew hot and she was moved to tears. As she looked at the girls of room 106 she felt truly glad that she came to the surface. She also wanted to spread this relationship to the surface dwellers and the People of the Earth. With that in mind she had to stop the radical faction no matter what.

Part 2

What Koutarou and the others were calling the earthquake weapon had been given the name of Earth Dragon. In the People of the Earth's culture, the spiritual energy running underground was

likened to a dragon. The name was taken from that. The dragon of the earth was stirred up to create earthquakes.

Elexis who was in the control room quite liked the name. The enterprise he managed himself also had dragon in its name after all.

Elexis was currently facing a brand-new computer, performing the final adjustments to Earth Dragon. This very advanced product was very delicate, and not only did have to harmonize with spiritual energy technology, but even with the help of magic, it would be difficult for it to reach its designed power. As a result, Elexis had been nailed down in this room for days with scarce change.

“I'm back.”

“Ah, welcome back, Maya.”

It was Maya that brought change to his life. When she came unexpected things happened one after another. Having completely lost to Koutarou, Elexis remained on Earth because he liked that Maya.

“How did it look?”

“They're a nonsense bunch as always. I think they've gotten even stronger than before.”

“What about Koutarou-kun?”

“Especially the boy... Here, you should take a look for yourself.”

“Thank you, Maya. I'm looking forward to it.”

Maya handed Elexis a memory card. Inside it was combat data about Koutarou and the others, retrieved from the weapons and information from the sensors placed around the factory. With this, Koutarou's and the girls' of room 106 combat capabilities should be properly measured. It was information that Elexis and Maya wanted.

“Elexis, that's quite the attitude when you have a beauty like me in front of you.”

“Hm? What's that supposed to mean?”

“You've got an expression like you've gotten a love letter from your lover.”

“I guess I can't dismiss calling Koutarou-kun my lover. Isn't that the same for you?”

“Fufufu.... we're quite twisted, aren't we?”

Maya and Elexis smiled at each other. This kind of situation would often happen lately. Looking at it broadly, the two thought similarly, so they didn't need to pay attention to other. But when it came to details, they could enjoy themselves as the other had ideas they themselves would never have.

“There's that, and it's partially a reaction to something that I don't like.”

“Are you stuck in your work?”

It was rare for Maya to bother with someone else's feelings. She would walk down her own path regardless of what others thought.

“No, that's not it. While it takes time, work is proceeding smoothly.”

“Then what is it?”

“Honestly speaking, I can't say I like this situation. I understand their goals, but their means are weapons of mass destruction and kidnapping.”

The same was true for Elexis. He rarely complained about others. That became a natural part of him as he was someone who stood above others. But ever since Maya's appearance, that part of him was gradually changing.

“Fufu, Then I guess we both have a guilty conscience about it.”

“I'm not rejecting the method itself. It's something I might use myself. However that kind of method needs to be limited and controlled. Yet they are giving priority to their feelings.”

While Maya and Elexis were working together with him, they didn't hold positive feelings for Tayuma. Both of them prioritized their goal, but Tayuma was too excessive. The two didn't like that.

“Evil has it own way of blooming.”

“That's right... In that regard, you are truly beautiful, Maya.”

“I can't obediently feel happy about being called an evil woman.”

“Hahaha, an evil woman, huh! I see, that's certainly what it would mean!”

“Gee... so shameless...”

The two were in the process of building their relationship as partners. However, their realization to the fact that they had built a relationship with an equal was slow, and it was questionable if they were seeing it or not.

“...Jokes aside, what is that Tayuma doing?”

“That would be kidnapping . He has gone with Maguz to go capture Kurano Daiha.”

“So it's finally starting.”

“Yes. The People of the Earth's civil war is about to begin.”

“...Leaving my standpoint aside, I would like to see Koutarou-kun and his friends shine. That way would be more elegant.”

“It's not I don't understand how you feel... do your best. Maki...”

The two's goal was far off. It's first step was cooperating with the People of the Earth's radical faction. What they got in return brought them closer to their goal. That's why it was still unclear how the two would influence the People of the Earth's future.

Afterword

Long time no see everyone, it's the author Takehaya.

This 15th volume goes on sale in March. That makes it just about five years since the first volume was released. And on this fifth year anniversary I have a major announcement to make. You may have seen or heard rumors about this before but—

Rokujouma no Shinryakusha!? is getting an anime!

This is all thanks to you readers who have supported me through these 17 volumes, including the side stories. I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Now then, the anime is set to be broadcast on the summer season, and preparations for it are rapidly advancing. I also regularly participate in scenario conferences.

As for the content itself, it is believed that it will be accurately adapted. Of course, the restrictions are more severe than on a novel, so it's not easy work. You can't make an anime just by splitting it up into 30 minute intervals.

On the other side of the hardship are points that will be strengthened by an anime. Such as characters gestures and cuteness, or Yurika's uselessness. I believe it will be portrayed in a way that you can clearly understand just by looking at it. Up until now, this had to be left up to everyone's imagination, so I believe it will work out as a major plus.

That's why after adding and subtracting the good and bad sides of anime, I can only pray that it will work out as a plus for everyone. While everyone will perceive it differently, I can only hope that as many readers can enjoy it.

Now that I think about it, an anime was first brought up around the fifth volume. Since then about three years have passed. I am personally grateful for it to be brought up again now. When making an anime there are a lot of things that has to be determined. Like for example that person that appears in the ruins of the first volume. If that character had to be strictly defined three years ago, the development from there on would be very restrained. But now we're up to the 15th volume. The development from this point has already been determined. From this point, there wouldn't be any problems if the previously undefined development was determined. That's why I believe the anime will be able to accurately portray that person in the ruins. Since novels and anime have such differences, I believe you will find a different entertainment if you chose to watch the anime.

This is about all the space I have for the afterword this time around. It was all centered around the anime, but it can't be helped this time around. That's just how big this news is.

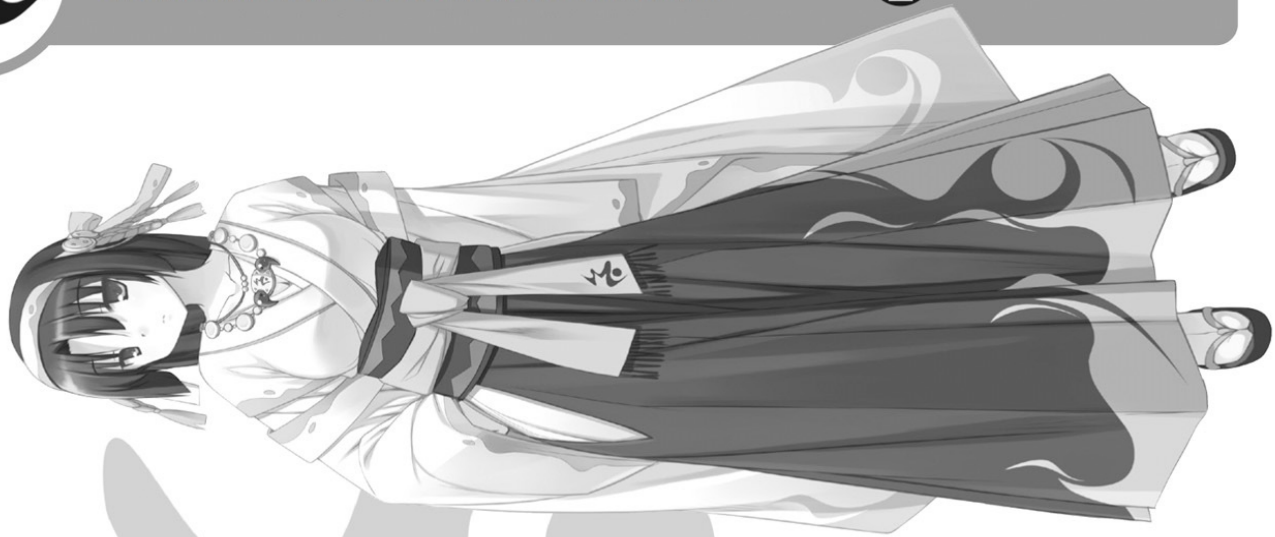
Well then finally, I would like to thank the editorial department who are helping with both the novel and now the anime, the respective companies involved, Poco-san for always drawing me cute characters and finally to all those of you who have bought this volume.

Then let us meet again in the afterword of volume 16.

January, 2014 Takehaya

Corona Convention

NEW! 2010/7/10



Article 10 Supplement 2

Exception clause. In that case that dating is exceptionally pure, the application of article 10 is excluded.